



# Sunday Dhamma Talks



BE 2550

**Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith**  
Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram



# **Sunday Dhamma Talks**

**BE 2550**

*by*

**Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith**

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**Dedication to Venerable Chao Khun  
Phra Mongkol Thepmuni**  
*Luang Phor Sodh Candasaro*



Wat Lake Panorama



Abbot Teaching



Luang Phor Sodh



Meditation Vihara



Phra Maha Jetiya Somdej



Thai Retreat



International Retreat

We dedicate this book and any merit it may generate, along with all our efforts at Wat Luang Phor Sodh – The beautiful campus, the Abbot’s teachings, Phra Maha Jetiya Somdej, the International Retreats, the Thai Retreats, and the 24-hour Meditation Vihara – to our beloved

**Venerable Chao Khun  
Phra Mongkol Thepmuni**

*Luang Phor Sodh Candasaro*

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I am deeply indebted to the National Broadcasting System of Thailand for making these Sunday Dhamma Talks possible. May their valiant efforts continue to prosper with the efficacy of the merit accumulated from this Dhamma propagation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro for serving as interviewer during these broadcasts and as the editor of this volume. May he also share in reaping the benefits of any merit generated.

Finally, let me also express my deep gratitude to Phra Maha Somchat and the Wat Luang Phor Sodh Audio-Visual Staff, as well as to my faithful Secretary Phra Maha Chainipoj for their indispensable support in making this endeavor successful.

***Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith  
Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh***

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

Hello. I'm Phra Bart – Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro from the United States. In BE 2550 (CE 2007) the National Broadcasting System of Thailand invited Phra Rajyanvisith to initiate a series of Sunday Dhamma Talks in English on the first Sunday of each month. I served as the interviewer in the broadcasts and am the editor of this volume.

This book is the compilation of Phra Rajyanvisith's Sunday Dhamma Talks for the first year, BE 2550 or CE 2007. There are six talks, presented from July through December. They begin with an overview of Lord Buddha's teachings, and continue through the details of the First Training on "*Sila*" or Moral Behavior.

The series continues, but this volume already provides a crucial foundation for mindful daily living and details the alarming consequences for those mechanically following the lax behavior commonplace in modern society. Along the way, it corrects critical misconceptions widely accepted as routine dogma, including fallacies regarding Lord Buddha's first five disciples. It is an extremely unique blend of transcendental and academic insight. Buddhists worldwide are extremely privileged to have it available in English.



First, I would like to introduce Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith for those who are not yet familiar with him. He is the Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram in Damnoen Saduak District of Rajburi Province, and one of Thailand's most eminent Meditation Masters and Buddhist scholars. He has been broadcasting, lecturing and publishing in Thai since BE 2513 (CE 1970), and toured universities in the United States for four years, before the press of responsibilities at home became too demanding.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith's mission is to revitalize Buddhism, placing equal emphasis on academic study and meditation practice. In 1986, he ordained as a monk with the name Sermchai Jayamangalo.

In 1998 he received the Royal Ecclesiastical Rank of Phra Bhavana Visutthikhun; and in 2004 he was awarded the rank of Phra Rajyanvisith. He has published over 40 books, 200 articles, and two journals, and recorded over 700 Dhamma lectures. In BE 2550 (CE 2007) he was awarded an honorary doctorate in Buddhist Administration from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith has led Wat Luang Phor Sodh to become a center of excellence in both Meditation Practice and Academic Studies. The temple trains over 20,000 participants annually in meditation, Dhamma, Pali and related areas. In collaboration with the National Office of Buddhism, the temple has trained over 1,500 senior Thai monks to be teachers of Vipassana Meditation.

It is one of very few temples in Thailand designated as both a Provincial Pali Studies Center and a Provincial Meditation Institute. In 1999, the Sangha Body established Wat Luang Phor Sodh as Rajburi's second Provincial School of Pali Education, offering the full-range of Pali studies from Pali Grammar up through Pali Level 9, the highest level. In 2001, the Sangha Body also approved establishing the temple as Rajburi's first Provincial Buddhist Meditation Institute, authorized to organize official meditation retreats for both monks and laity.

The Wat also serves as a center for both Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and the World Buddhist University. As a Center for Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, the temple trains senior monks from throughout Ecclesiastical Region 15. As an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University, the Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute (BMI) trains a continual stream of international meditators in English, with exceptional results.

In brief, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith has an extremely impressive record and we are particularly privileged to have his teachings in English. You will find that the broadcasts compiled here go far beyond the ordinary in both scholastic erudition and inspiration for meditation practice. This is an exceptional union of academic and transcendental knowledge, rarely available in English. Please take full advantage of it.

*Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro  
Interviewer and Editor*



## Chapter 2

# The Night Lord Buddha Achieved Enlightenment

July 15, 2007

**Question 1:** Well, sir, we are going to discuss the night on which Lord Buddha achieved enlightenment and the methodology he used. Can you begin by telling us exactly when that night occurred?

**Answer 1:** Good morning, everyone. Lord Buddha was enlightened on the night of the full moon day of the month of Visakha, the 6<sup>th</sup> lunar month, 2,595 years ago. Visakha Puja is the triple anniversary of Lord Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and *parinirvana* or passing on to Nirvana. Like most Buddhist holidays, it follows the lunar calendar, so the date varies from year to year. This year it fell on May 31<sup>st</sup>. In December of 1999, the United Nations established Visakha Puja or Vesak Day as an official holiday to be observed in the UN Headquarters and all branch offices, thus giving worldwide recognition to the importance of this event.

**Question 2:** Before we focus on that particular night, I would like to ask about what Lord Buddha must have done preceding that night. I have heard it said that enlightenment occurs in an instant, but that uncountable eons of time must be spent in advance preparation for it.

**Answer 2:** Yes, that is true. The main preparation is fulfillment of the ten perfections or *Baramie*. The pre-Buddha, or Bodhisatva previously worked on completing the ten factors of perfection for four uncountable lifetimes. During this period, he met 24 earlier Buddhas. The ten factors of perfection are *Dana* - generosity, *Sila* - morality, *Samadhi* – concentration, *Pañña* - right wisdom, *Viriya* – right effort, *Khanti* - patience, *Sacca* - truth, *Attithana* – resolution, *Metta* - loving kindness, and *Ubekkha* - equanimity. These ten have to be developed up to the highest level, called Noble Factors of perfection. For example, with respect to *Dana*, the pre-Buddha could sacrifice even his own life for others. That is what we call supreme perfection.

**Question 3:** Now, please tell us about the actual night of enlightenment. How did Lord Buddha achieve enlightenment? What methodology did he use?

**Answer 3:** After meditating by himself for six years, the Pre-Buddha or Bodhisattva, sat down under the Bo Tree and resolved not to get up until he achieved enlightenment. He, then, applied the scientific method in its highest form, going even beyond what we consider scientific today. Like a scientist, he was researching the truth about nature. But, he did not flinch at asking the biggest and most crucial questions about the nature of life. He tuned his mind into a pure, refined instrument for objective observation, developing super-normal abilities to make it into a highly effective and efficient instrument like the medical researcher’s microscope – able to see the germs and bacteria that cause disease and sickness. Similarly, he also tuned his mind to be like the astronomer’s

telescope, permitting him to see the whole universe, even those aspects which are too refined to see with the naked eye. Thus, he collected the necessary and sufficient, reliable, valid, and relevant data. He then analyzed these data to achieve enlightenment throughout the three watches of the night.

**Question 4:** What is a watch?

**Answer 4:** At that time, in India, the night was divided into three four-hour watches – that is, periods of guard duty. The first was from eighteen hundred hours, or six P.M. until twenty-two hundred hours or ten P.M. The middle watch was from twenty-two hundred hours or ten P.M. until two hundred hours or two A.M. Then, the final watch was from two hundred hours or two A.M. until six hundred hours or six A.M. Lord Buddha’s enlightenment developed in 3 stages, corresponding to these three watches.

**Question 5:** What did Lord Buddha see during the first watch?

**Answer 5:** In the first watch, Lord Buddha sat under the Bo Tree and concentrated his mind up to the fourth level of absorption or Jhana in order to remove all hindrances from his mind. His mind became pure – very pure. In that state of mind he could recall past lives – uncountable past lives – both his own past lives and the past lives of other beings. He could see all world beings – human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, demons, celestial beings, Brahman beings, and Formless Brahman beings. He could see all beings in the whole universe. He saw that all of these were continually dying and then getting reborn again all the time – in endless re-incarna-

tion. This is what we call scientific research, using a very effective and efficient instrument to see with.

He saw reality – natural reality. He saw that all world beings are reborn – right away – right away after dying. And, he saw that most of them are reborn into the suffering worlds – as animals, hungry ghosts, demons, or hell beings. He saw all the worlds of Hell beings, down in the lower depths of the universe. He saw that only very few get reborn in the happy worlds such as the Human World, Celestial World, the Brahman World, or the Formless Brahman World. This caused him to feel compassion for all beings.

The Brahman World, or more correctly the Form Brahman World, corresponds to mental concentration on a physical object such as a sphere, color, or candle flame. But, Formless Brahman meditators don't want to use anything as the base of the mind. They just want to stop still at the center of the center. This is Formless Absorption. Those who die while their mind is concentrated at any level in the Brahman World or Formless Brahman World will be reborn in that world. These planes are above the sensual heavens. But, Lord Buddha saw that even these very few highly-fortunate beings, when they eventually die, are born right back into the system again and can be reborn into the lower worlds.

In conclusion, during the first watch Lord Buddha saw the past. He saw what had led up to the present situation. He saw the whole universe with all its various types of beings and that all of these beings are caught up in the endless cycle of death and rebirth. He saw that most beings will be reborn into

the suffering worlds, and this led him to feel great compassion for all beings.

**Question 6:** And then, what did Lord Buddha see during the second watch?

**Answer 6:** After seeing this endless cycle of death and rebirth during the first part of the night, Lord Buddha felt eager to learn what caused these beings to be reborn in either suffering or happy worlds. So, in the second watch he again meditated up to the fourth absorption or Jhana, concentrating his mind to purify it from hindrances. When his mind was very firmly concentrated and very pure, he made a wish to follow individual beings from the past through the present and into the future. This enabled him to see the cause and effect of past actions (*kamma*) leading to rebirth in either suffering or happy worlds.

He saw five major causes of rebirth in the suffering worlds. Number one was intentionally killing other world beings. Number two was theft. Number three was adultery. Number four was telling lies. And, Number five was addiction to intoxicants.

These were the major causes, but there were also others, such as careless sexual affairs – thinking only about sex and engaging in sex while taking intoxicants. This is just an example. This is bad *kamma* (action and reaction) for those who behave this way. He saw that. Many world beings who acted improperly received suffering as the result – either during the present life or after dying. Bad *kamma* was the



essential cause of being reborn into the suffering worlds – the worlds of hungry ghosts, animals, demons, or hell beings.

He saw all the Hell beings. You must know that in this universe there is not only what we see and hear with our human senses. There are also more and more refined beings existing in this universe – beings which ordinary humans cannot see. But, he was able to see them in meditation, by beginning with concentrating the mind and purifying it. He developed supernatural vision, supernatural hearing, and supernatural touching which enabled him to see.

So, he saw the whole universe. The human world is just one little part of it. The universe has three levels. The first is the Sensual World. The second is the Form Brahman World. And, the third is the Formless Brahman World.

The Sensual World includes the happy worlds of human and celestial beings. There are six levels of celestial beings and then the human beings. Below that come the animals. But, even those born into the happy worlds finally have to die and most will be reborn into the suffering worlds. Very few are reborn into the happy worlds. Lord Buddha noted that the animals in the seas are countless in number.

Most humans do a mixture of good and bad, but the tendency is to do bad *kamma* unconsciously, because they are not aware that it is bad *kamma*. For example, regarding taking intoxicants – most people don't realize what seriously bad *kamma* it is. A drink with the meal is widely accepted in most all cultures. But, for sure, those addicted to intoxicants will go to hell when they die – 100%.

**Question 7:** In this regard, I have heard you tell a fascinating story of rescuing your father from hell. Could you tell it for our listeners?

**Answer 7:** My father took intoxicants – only very little in the morning and in the evening, just before breakfast or dinner. If available, he took it. If not, no. So, he was not really addicted to liquor – just liked it, and if it was available he tried to get it – that’s all.

But, when he died, that attachment caused him to be born in hell. My daughters were able to see this. My daughters, when they were 12, 13, and 14 years old, meditated to Dhammakaya. They could develop the highest absorption levels to get supernatural vision, hearing and touching. I wanted them to see their grandfather. He had passed away early and the daughters had never seen him.

After developing absorption up to about the fourth level to purify hindrances and then develop supernatural hearing and vision, my daughters were able to see where my father had been reborn. They started from the highest level and worked their way down. They didn’t see him in the Formless Brahman, Brahman, Celestial or Human Worlds. Finally, they found him in the Fifth Hell, suffering, very, very seriously, in accordance with *kamma*. At that level, one had to drink molten metal – very hot. It burns everything. They all scream very loud and suffer terribly.

But, we were able to help. We offered him the Five Precepts and he accepted. And, we advised him to appreciate what a meritorious thing his son and grand-daughters had

done. He appreciated and said “sadhu,” meaning “I appreciate this.” Then, we asked him to remember all the good works he had done. I reminded him that he had sacrificed a piece of land to the temple and that he often went to the temple to make merit. I told him to recall these things and appreciate them. After that, the sphere in the center of his body became bigger and brighter until it became the size seen at the center of celestial bodies. Then, the hell-being body disappeared, and he became a celestial being right away – instantaneous rebirth. The hell-being body just disappeared.

**Question 8:** Wow, that’s quite a story! Now, finally, what did Lord Buddha see during the third watch?

**Answer 8:** Well, to conclude about the Second Watch, Lord Buddha saw that all world beings get reborn in accordance with their *kamma* – action and reaction based on their good or bad behavior. That is, he saw how the actions of the past influence the present and the future.

In the third watch, pre-Buddha, now had all the reliable, valid and pertinent information he needed. He had obtained nearly perfect data through developing concentration of mind leading to supernatural seeing, hearing, and touching. So, in the third watch he wanted to analyze in detail the root cause of suffering.

He had already seen that world beings have to suffer due to reincarnation caused by bad *kamma*. What lies behind their bad conduct? Even those who do good, after getting good results for just a brief period exhaust that reward and receive another result – either good or bad.

He saw that the life of world beings is always subject to change – impermanent – in accordance with cause and effect. Now, again, he saw that everything in the world is impermanent and essentially suffering, because it cannot last forever. Life is change, nothing but change all the time. The young inevitably become old, become sick, and die. No one can avoid it. When you look carefully, all beings – even the Brahman and Formless Brahman beings, who have very long lives, are subject to old age sickness and death. Each Lord Buddha has to collect merit over a very long time, but Brahman and Formless Brahman beings may live to see the arrival of four or five Lord Buddhas.

In the third watch, Lord Buddha began to analyze the root cause of this suffering in detail. He found ignorance to be the root cause. Living in this world is like being in a dark room where we cannot see anything. Or, it is like a chicken inside the egg who never sees the outside. Ignorance means no knowledge of the past – you don't know where you have been before becoming a human being – right? Me too. Unless we meditate to see the past as he did. Also, no knowledge of the future. You don't know where you are going – even just for tomorrow – and especially after dying.

But, if we practice meditation, we can see as Lord Buddha saw before us. He saw the past and he saw the future and he saw the past the present and the future together. Normal human beings have never seen this; have never known it. This is the first kind of ignorance. Second is no knowledge of the cause of the cause of the cause, down to the root cause of suffering, as in Lord Buddha's analysis of Dependent

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Origination. Finally, number three is no knowledge of the Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths are: (1) the Noble Truth of world beings' suffering, (2) the Noble Truth of the cause and the root cause of suffering, (3) the Noble Truth of the possibility of no suffering – supreme peace and happiness – that is, Nirvana. If you meditate to that state of mind, you can experience it for yourself. But, most world beings will never meditate; never touch that level; never know it. (4) Noble Truth Number Four is the Noble Eightfold Path leading to getting rid of the cause of suffering.

But, Lord Buddha already saw the whole universe and above the universe and below the universe. He saw not only one universe, but countless universes. He even saw three universes together, like three circles drawn touching each other. The area in-between is a very serious, serious hell for those holding wicked wrong beliefs who perform and teach immoral behavior based on these misconceptions – like those who kill others with the belief that this will bring them to a happy state. That is not true. This delusion is a serious sin that will cause them to be reborn in this deepest hell, beyond the universe.

Lord Buddha's analysis of Dependent Origination showed that such delusion or ignorance is the root cause of suffering – no knowledge of the past, no knowledge of the future, and no knowledge linking the past, the present, and the future – no knowledge of Dependent Origination or the Four Noble Truths.

This causes false assumptions, misperceptions and misconceptions which lead to false beliefs, misstatements and misbehavior, such as violating the five precepts or engaging in *abayamuk* (the road to ruin) such as addiction to gambling or bar hopping – giving free reign to sexual feelings and intoxication. All of these will result in suffering either in this life or in the future – sooner or later, more or less.

In conclusion, during the third watch Lord Buddha analyzed the root cause underlying suffering and found it to be ignorance. He sought to overcome this by teaching the Four Noble Truths, including the Eightfold Path as specific guidelines for leading one's life so as to minimize suffering and maximize happiness, while purifying the heart and mind. These were the lessons of enlightenment.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very, very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. Your presentation has been both instructive and entertaining.



## Chapter 3

# Asalaha Puja

July 29, 2007

**Question 1:** Well, sir, we are going to discuss Asalaha Puja, the major Buddhist holiday today. Can you begin by telling us what Asalaha Puja commemorates?

**Answer 1:** Good morning, everyone. Asalaha Puja commemorates the day Lord Buddha gave his first teaching – his first sermon – the Dhammacakkhapavattana Sutta, 2,595 years ago. Like most Buddhist holidays, it follows the lunar calendar, so the date varies from year to year. It occurs on the full moon day of the eighth lunar month of Asalaha, which is always the day before entering the Buddhist Lent or the formal Rainy Season. This year, it is today, Sunday July 29<sup>th</sup>.

After Lord Buddha achieved enlightenment, he spent seven weeks dwelling in the area surrounding the Bo Tree, contemplating what to do with his newfound knowledge. Initially he was inclined not to teach, thinking that men were generally driven by lust and hate, so they were incapable of understanding such sublime knowledge. He realized that his insights were very deep and hard to comprehend, so he doubted whether anyone else could understand them, even if he were to teach.

In his second week, while sitting under the Goat Herders' Banyan Tree, Brahma Sahampati visited Lord Buddha



and told him what a calamity it would be for all mankind if Lord Buddha didn't teach. He asserted strongly that some people were, indeed, ready to hear and understand Dhamma.

Ultimately, Lord Buddha concluded with his analogy of lotuses in a pond: Some people were like lotuses right at the surface ready to bloom – they could understand if given only a brief word. A second group were like lotuses near the surface. They could understand if given a more complete explanation and would bloom soon. A third group were like the lotuses still deep in the water. They would not bloom soon, but could still benefit from his teaching. Finally, the last group were like the lotuses stuck in the mud at the bottom of the pond. They were not destined to bloom – they were only food for the fish and turtles. He should not waste his time trying to teach this group.

Having decided to teach, Lord Buddha reflected on whom he should teach first. He first thought of his own former teachers – Alara Kalamakhotr and Uddaka Ramaputta – but perceived with his psychic powers that they had both passed on to the Formless Brahman Heaven. So, he decided to teach the Five Hermits or *pañcavaggiya* who had been his own followers until he had given up extreme self-torture for the middle path. He did this after a celestial being showed him in meditation that a lyre string, when overly stretched, is brittle and liable to break. And, that a lyre string, when too loose, doesn't make any sound. Only the middle path, tuned just right, succeeds in producing beautiful music. So, he took some food. Seeing this, the Five Hermits thought he was giving up, and left him.

With his psychic powers, he saw that they were now dwelling in the Isipatana Deer Park near Benares. As he approached them on foot, the Hermits agreed not to welcome him with respect, but he told them that he had achieved enlightenment and asked them to reflect that he had never said this before. This eased their skepticism sufficiently for them to listen to his teaching.

**Question 2:** What did he teach?

**Answer 2:** He began by teaching the middle path and the danger of the two extremes of over indulgence on the one hand and self-torture on the other hand. But, his major teaching was about the Four Noble Truths that were his ultimate discovery in enlightenment:

First, the Truth of Suffering: the Noble Truth that all world beings are suffering. Most simply, birth inevitably leads to old age, sickness and death. But, Lord Buddha saw further that death regularly leads to rebirth in an endless chain of continuous suffering. Even the Brahmans who reach the highest heavens ultimately die and return to suffering in the lower planes.

Second, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering – that suffering is immediately due to craving or over-desire, and is ultimately based on ignorance. Living in this world is like being in a dark room where we cannot see anything. Or, it is like a chicken inside the egg who never sees the outside. Ignorance means no knowledge of the past – you don't know where you have been before becoming a human being – right? Me too.

Ignorance is no knowledge of the past, no knowledge of the future, and no knowledge of cause and effect from the past through the present to the future. In short, it is no knowledge of Dependent Origination and no knowledge of the Four Noble Truths.

Ignorance causes world beings misassumption, misconception, and misunderstanding, leading to misbehavior such as violating the five precepts or *abayamuk* (uncontrolled behavior such as bar hopping). This is the road to ruin – giving free reign to sexual feelings and intoxication, or addiction to gambling. It will result in suffering either in this life or in the future – sooner or later, more or less. But, if we meditate to see the past and future and cause and effect as Lord Buddha did, we can see clearly as he saw.

The Third Noble Truth is the Truth of Happiness – the existence of a state with no suffering, where the cause of suffering has been eliminated – the supreme peace and happiness of Nirvana. If you meditate to that state of mind, you can experience it directly for yourself, temporarily. But, most world beings will never meditate, never touch that level, never know that feeling.

Fourth is the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of Suffering – specific guidelines on how to live. They are Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. They are often summarized as the Three Trainings: *Sila* or morality, *Samadhi* or concentration, and *Vipassana* or insight meditation leading to right wisdom or *paññā*.

**Question 3:** What was the result of this teaching?

**Answer 3:** The immediate result was that Kondañña, the leader of the Five Hermits, gained the Dhamma Eye – that is, he transcended to the first level of Noble Disciple, Stream Enterer or *Sodabana* – the last leg of the journey to enlightenment. From then on, he was known as Añña Kondañña or the Kondañña who sees.

He had been the youngest of the 108 Brahmans who foretold the future of Prince Siddhattha as a baby – the only one to predict firmly that the prince would definitely become a Buddha. When the prince left the palace to become a recluse, Kondañña organized the sons of four of the 108 Brahmans to join him in following Prince Siddhattha. The other Brahmans had all passed away.

Now, Kondañña was the first to gain transcendence and asked Lord Buddha to ordain him. This completed the Triple-Gem – the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. This is what makes Asalaha Puja one of the Four Major Holy Days of Buddhism.

**Question 4:** You say that the most important aspect of Asalaha Puja Day is that it completed the Triple Gem. This is an important term that we hear often, but it is a bit confusing. Can you explain it for us?

**Answer 4:** The three gems of Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha lie at the heart of Buddhism. As Lord Buddha was passing on to Nirvana, he did not appoint any human successor, but rather said that from now on the Dhamma and the Sangha would be the teachers. This is the importance of

the Triple Gem. We learn Dhamma (his teachings on the true nature of reality) and we learn it from the monks who collectively constitute the Sangha, which is the third component of the Triple Gem. This Triple Gem was initiated on Asalaha Puja Day.

**Question 5:** What happened following that first day?

**Answer 5:** Although the four younger hermits did not immediately transcend, they were impressed by the transcendence of their leader. Lord Buddha arranged to teach each one of the four hermits personally over the next four days. Each day, three would go on the alms round and get food for all six of them (including Lord Buddha) while he taught one of them individually. The result was that after five days, all five had transcended to the Stream Enterer or *Sodabana* level of Noble Disciple.

**Question 6:** How did they all eventually achieve enlightenment?

**Answer 6:** On the sixth day, Lord Buddha gave his second sermon – the *Anattalakkhana Sutta* or Sermon on Non-Self. Upon listening to this sermon, all five achieved the complete enlightenment of the highest *Arahant* Noble Disciple.

In this sermon, Lord Buddha compared and contrasted “True Self” with “Non-Self.” This is a very important point, since many Buddhist scholars mistakenly say that Lord Buddha never spoke of True Self.

In teaching about *rupa* or form, which means body, Lord Buddha said this is not your true body because you

cannot say to this body “Body, don’t grow old, don’t get sick, don’t die.” If this were your true body, it would not grow old, would not get sick and would not die. This is a description of what happens in Nirvana.

Lord Buddha, then, repeated the same teaching for each of the other four Aggregates or *khanda* making up the psycho-physical human organism. These are feelings or *vedana*, perception or *sañña*, thought or *sangkhara*, and consciousness or *viññana*.

**Question 7:** It sounds like there are various steps along the way to enlightenment. Can you explain further?

**Answer 7:** Yes, there are four steps along the final path to enlightenment. These are referred to as the Four Noble Disciples or *ariyapuggala* who are guaranteed of eventual enlightenment.

Progress is measured by eradication of the 10 final spiritual fetters or *sanyojana* – the most deeply imbedded defilements which are the last to go. The 10 spiritual fetters are divided into five gross lower fetters and five higher fetters related to meditation. The five lower fetters are wrong idea regarding self, doubt, clinging to false rituals, lustful desire, and irritation. The five higher fetters are delight in subtle forms, delight in formless meditation, pride, distracting thoughts, and ignorance.

The first Noble Disciple is the Stream Enterer or *Sodabana* who has eradicated the first three of the ten fetters. He is able to realize the Four Noble Truths somewhat, but not completely.

The second Noble Disciple is the Once Returner or *Sakadagami* who only needs to come back to the human realm one more time. He has also minimized fetters four and five which are desire and irritation. These are opposite sides of the same coin.

The third Noble Disciple is the Non-Returner or *Anakami* who has eradicated all five of the lower fetters. He never needs to return to the human realm, but will live all remaining lifetimes in the Pure Land of Heaven, that is the *Suthawasa* Brahman Realm, until he eventually achieves full enlightenment.

Finally, the Fourth Noble Disciple is the Arahant or Saint, who has eradicated all ten of the fetters and achieved full enlightenment.

These are the detailed steps, but some may achieve full enlightenment right away through perfect meditation.

**Question 8:** Thank you very much. Now, let me turn to the more immediate and practical concerns of our listeners. What exactly should a Buddhist do to celebrate Asalaha Puja Day?

**Answer 8:** The unique aspect of Asalaha Puja is that it comes at the beginning of the rainy season or Buddhist Lent. Initially, the monks didn't have any cloth to wear while bathing. One day, Lord Buddha's great lay-woman follower, Maha Upasika Visakha, was coming to bring offerings and came upon the monks all showering naked in the rain.

She was distressed and asked Lord Buddha for permission to donate rain cloths for the monks. He agreed and gave the monks permission to accept such gifts. So, it has become a custom for Thai Buddhists to offer rain cloths at the beginning of the rains. These gifts are often combined with other personal necessities such as tooth brushes, soap, and towels which will serve the monks throughout the rainy season.

The laity should, of course, also bring food offerings as they would normally and listen to Dhamma teachings and practice meditation. Another traditional gift is lighting. This can be either traditional lighting, candles, or modern lighting – light bulbs.

Teachings on Asalaha Puja Day are often concerned with the Four Noble Truths. Monks often chant the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta. Many wats also organize a *Wientien*, walking mindfully three times around key Buddha statues to show respect.

Buddhists may take eight precepts for the duration of the holy day and night, being careful to refrain from bad conduct, to do good, and to work on purifying their minds. In fact, these teachings of Lord Buddha, observing at least five precepts, should always be practiced in order to receive good results throughout life.

**Question 9:** What are the Five Precepts that one should observe, and how important are they?

**Answer 9:** The Five Precepts are (1) Avoid killing living beings, (2) Avoid theft, (3) Avoid adultery or sexual



relations outside marriage, (4) Avoid false or nasty speech, and (5) Avoid intoxicants.

Lord Buddha taught these five precepts based on his enlightened knowledge of the natural laws of life and rebirth. Violation of any of these precepts yields harmful results both in this lifetime and in future rebirth. For example, violation of the first precept on killing results in physical disaster such as sickness, a short life span or becoming lame through such events as accidents or natural phenomena like fire, disease, or lightning.

Violation of the second precept on theft results in property disaster such as having property destroyed through events like fire, flood, robbery, or being seized by the government.

Violation of the third precept on adultery can result in a broken home or loss of reputation and position, or even disease such as HIV and also life threatening situations due to jealousy.

Violation of the fourth precept on false or nasty speech can lead to discredit with no one believing your word, even when you are blatantly falsely accused.

Violation of the fifth precept on intoxicants leads to disaster in both physical and mental health, such as weakness of the body, alcoholism, high blood pressure, and working disability. No one will rely on you.

In addition, there are unhappy states or hells for rebirth related to each of these precept violations. For example, those

committing adultery may be reborn as dogs or as hungry ghosts covered with body sores.

**Question 10:** Finally, you have mentioned the importance of meditation. Can you give us a brief introduction on how to meditate?

**Answer 10:** Sit in a regular meditation posture, cross-legged as seen in some Buddha images, with the right leg resting upon the left. The right hand rests on the left, palms turned upwards, with the right index finger just touching the left thumb. The body is upright and the mind is fully alert. Take a deep breath and relax the body until you feel comfortable. Close your eyelids lightly, do not press them.

In basic samatha-vipassana practice, we use two aids: a mantra or repetitive word (*parikamma-bhavana*) and an object of visualization (*parikamma-nimitta*). The repetitive word is *samma arahang* and the object of visualization is a bright, clear luminous sphere. Using these aids, we draw the mind inward to the center of the body. Such concentration allows the mind components of vision, memory, thought and awareness to come together into oneness.

Begin by visualizing a bright sphere at the centre of the body, just two finger widths above the navel or belly button. This is the mind's permanent resting place. When a person or any other creature is born, dies, sleeps or awakens, the Dhamma Sphere which governs the body arises from this position. The Dhamma Sphere is composed of the Vision Sphere, the Memory Sphere, the Thought Sphere, and the Awareness Sphere.

Keep the bright sphere resting at the centre of the body. Mentally recite the words *samma arahang* continuously to keep the sphere still and make it become brighter and clearer. Focus your mind at the bright center of the sphere, and at the bright center of each successive sphere that emerges. Pay no attention to any external sensation. Do not force the mind too strongly. Do not use the physical eyes to focus on the vision. Always focus on the center of each new sphere which emerges. Rest the mind there.

Eventually, a bright clear sphere will arise. This is the Dhamma Sphere. Do not be overjoyed. Keep your mind calm in equanimity. Hold the mind still, and stop repeating *Samma Arahang*. Just concentrate at the center of the Dhamma sphere. This is your own nucleus which gives rise to this body and this mind. This is the beginning of the path. Deeper levels of meditation are achieved in the same way – always stopping still at the center of the center. You have already learned the essence of the technique.

Now let us slowly come out of meditation and share our merit with all beings everywhere throughout the universe. May all beings be happy. May all beings be free from suffering. May all beings be free from enmity.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. You have taught us a lot and opened new doors.

**Phra Rajyanvisith:** You are welcome. May Lord Buddha be with all of you.

## Chapter 4

# Why Buddhas Are So Rare

September 2, 2007

**Question 1:** Well, sir, today we are going to discuss “Why Buddhas are so rare.” Can you begin by telling us how rare the appearance of a Buddha is?

**Answer 1:** Good morning, everyone. The appearance of a Buddha is very, very rare indeed. You cannot count the time between Buddhas in ordinary earth years.

When Lord Buddha achieved enlightenment, he saw millions and millions of “*chakravan*” or cosmoses, all repeatedly coming into existence, lasting for a while, and then disintegrating. The “*chakravan*” includes the heavens and hells as well as the visible universe.

To describe this, he had to formulate astronomical measures. First, he defined the “*maha kappa*” or “eon” as the time for one complete cycle in which a cosmos is born, exists, disintegrates, and then lies dormant until it is born again. Then, he introduced the word “*asangkheyya*,” which literally means “incalculable,” to refer to the number  $10^{140}$ . For Buddhas, time is measured in “*asangkheyya kappa*” or ten to the 140-ieth power times the lifespan of a cosmos.

In addition, Lord Buddha defined an “*antara-kappa*” or “sub-eon.” When humans are pure, the average human

lifespan is one *asankheyya* or  $10^{140}$  years. Due to killing other living beings, the average lifespan decreases by roughly one year per 100 years. For example, in Lord Buddha's day, the average human lifespan was 100 years. Now, 2,500 years later, the average lifespan is about 75 years. Lord Buddha defines a sub-eon (*antara-kappa*) as the time it takes for the average human lifespan in a realm to decrease from one *asankheyya* years to 10 years and then increase back up to one *asankheyya* again. An eon or Maha Kappa is roughly 16,640 *asankheyya* – a truly astronomical number. This should give you some feeling for the vastness of an eon.

For our own cosmos, scientists estimate that the origin or “big bang” occurred on the order of ten thousand million years ago. During this vast period, only four Buddhas have appeared. In fact, however, we are very lucky. Some universes are born and die without any Buddhas emerging at all.

The four Buddhas in our cosmos are: Buddha Kakusandho, Buddha Konagamano, Buddha Kassapo, and our own Buddha Gotamo. There is still one more Buddha to come. He is Buddha Maiteyyo, who is waiting in Tusita Heaven for his proper time.

**Question 2:** Thank you, Sir. By explaining the astronomical Buddhist measures, you anticipated my second question. Now, why is the appearance of a Buddha so rare?

**Answer 2:** The reason that the appearance of a Buddha is so rare is because it takes such a long, long time to become a Buddha. This is because of the long time needed to collect and realize all 10 Factors of Perfection flawlessly.

For our Lord Buddha Gotama, it took a total of 20 asangkheyya kappa for preparation. The first phase – making up his mind to become a Buddha – took seven asangkheyya kappa. This lasted from the period of Buddha Brahma Deva to the time of Buddha Sakyamuni. During this long interval he listened to the teachings of many hundreds of thousands of Buddhas and his advanced meditation states of transcendental insight (*ñānadassana*) gradually matured until he felt a strong wish to become a Buddha.

The second phase of preparation lasted nine asangkheyya kappa, from the time of Buddha Sakyamuni to the period of Buddha Dipankara. This phase resulted in him expressing his wish in intentions, words and deeds. Buddha Dipankara firmly predicted that he would eventually become a Buddha. This was the beginning of becoming formally a Bodhisatta.

In order to be firmly qualified as a Buddha, any Bodhisatta must fulfill eight conditions: (1) He must be a human being; (2) He must be male; (3) He must be qualified to be enlightened as an arahant saint (but pre-Buddhas do not aim for this); (4) He must have “gone forth” to be ordained; (5) He must be full in high virtue. That is, he must have attained clear transcendental insight, (*ñānadassana*), and super powers (*abhiññā*); (6) He must fulfill all Ten Factors of Perfection (*Paramattha Parami*) to the highest “Noble” level, such as offering one’s own life for another; (7) He must be willing to be a Buddha; and (8) He must meet a previous Lord Buddha who firmly predicts that he will become a Buddha.

At the time of Buddha Dipankara, our Bodhisatta was born in Amaravadi as Sumedho, the first son of a Brahman. He went forth to become a hermit and gained super powers. One day at Rammavati, he laid down in the mud to make a human bridge for Buddha Dipankara and 400,000 disciples to walk on, and he made the firm resolve to become a Buddha. Then, Buddha Dipankara predicted that: “This young ascetic, lying down as a bridge at the risk of his life, will become a Buddha named Gotama at the end of the next four asangkheyya and 100,000 kappa.”

The third phase – completing all factors of perfection to pristine excellence of the highest level – took an additional four asangkheyya kappa plus 100,000 kappa. This lasted from the time of Buddha Dipankara to the period of Buddha Kassapa. During this interval he met 24 Buddhas and all predicted that he would later become a Buddha.

Any Bodhisatta who is sure to be enlightened must still complete spotless realization of all Ten Perfections to the very highest level. During this period, he will never be reborn in the lowest, 8<sup>th</sup> Hell, *Avejji*, or the *Logantara* Hell, which is outside the universe. He will never become a Hungry Ghost or an animal smaller than a small bird. When born as a human, the Bodhisatta will not be blind or deaf or mute or lame from birth. The Bodhisatta will not be female or bisexual or homosexual, and will never commit the heinous *Anandriya* crimes such as killing his mother or father.

When born in the celestial realms, he will never be born in the *Asaññi* World of the Brahman Realm where those who reject perception stay as if asleep. He will also never be

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born into the *Sutthavasa* Brahman World which is reserved for *Anakami* Noble Disciples. The Bodhisatta will practice only pure action, speech, and thought.

**Question 3:** It sounds like the path of a Bodhisatta – becoming a Buddha – is quite different from the path of an Arahant. Can you explain the difference?

**Answer 3:** Yes, the most direct path to personal enlightenment as an Arahant is straight upwards through the four transcendental Noble Disciple States – Stream Enterer (*Sodabana*), Once Returner (*Sakadakami*), Non-Returner (*Anakami*) and Buddhist Saint (*Arahant*).

With effort, many meditators can visit these states of consciousness temporarily in this lifetime. The task, then, is to actually realize these perfected states in daily thought, speech, and behavior. This requires a long, long time – at least 100,000 kappa. But, this is still relatively quick in comparison with the 4 asankheyya plus 100,000 kappa required for a full Buddha.

The difference is that the Arahant only seeks personal liberation. The Bodhisatta seeks to become a Buddha to also help others achieve liberation.

**Question 4:** Thank you very much. Now, please tell us about Lord Buddha's last life prior to being born as Prince Siddhattha – the lifetime in which he finally completely fulfilled all factors of perfection.

**Answer 4:** This is the very enjoyable story of Vesandara, which is widely acclaimed throughout Thailand. It is



said that anyone who listens to it gains great merit. Many temples allocate up to two or three days to presenting it in detail, decorating their sala or pavilion to look like the Himalayan Forest.

In his last human life before becoming a Buddha, our Bodhisatta was born as Vesandara, the eldest son of King Sanjaya and Queen Phusati who ruled the Sivi Kingdom. While still very young, he displayed his exceptional generosity by requesting property from his mother ready to be given away. He began to govern when only 16 years old, and constructed six Salas for donating property to the poor.

During that time, a neighboring state, Kalingkarat, suffered from severe drought and famine. The king of Kalingkarat could not solve the problem, even though he himself took eight precepts for seven days. So, he appointed eight Brahmans to ask for Vesandara's white elephant, Pajjai Nakhendara, who was renowned for the fact that wherever he walked the rain would be just right for the season.

Vesandara readily gave them his elephant, but this caused the people of Sivi to demonstrate in protest. They petitioned King Sanjaya to take back the throne and banish his son Vesandara. The father, fearing a revolution, consented. Despite this, Vesandara still gave away the elephant and prepared to be banished and to live as a hermit.

Vesandara ordered his wife Matsi to donate his property to those who keep proper precepts, and asked her to take care of his son and daughter, while permitting her to get remarried. But, she requested that she and her son and

daughter follow him and stay along with him. So, the Bodhisatta left the city along with his wife, son and daughter, in a four-horse carriage, supplied by his father.

He gave away everything he owned – even the horses and the carriage – to various Brahmans who asked for them. In the end, he and his wife walked on foot, carrying the two small children. They walked thirty *yojana* (leagues), but they received aid from Celestial King Sakka to complete this journey in one day.

When they arrived at Ceta State, the King, who was his uncle, invited Vesandara to govern, but he rejected that and went on to stay at Mount Vongkot, where the deva engineer Vissanukamma had already built two cottages, one for him and one for his wife and children. He stayed alone as a hermit in one cottage and his wife and children stayed in the other. He practiced Dhamma and Morality and Meditation. For daily living, Matsi collected fruits and roots from the forest for all of them.

One day, while Matsi was in the forest, a Brahman beggar named Jujaka came to ask for Vesandara's son and daughter to be his servants. Although Vesandara loved them dearly, he gave them away, with setting a high price for their resale that only a king could pay. The Brahman beggar lost his way and brought the children to Sivi Town, where they were immediately recognized. King Sanjaya quickly bought them, paying a high price. Brahman Jujaka, unused to so much wealth, ate too much and died. Thus, all the property which he had received from King Sanjaya reverted to the Crown.

Celestial King Sakka Deva Raja, who is also called Indra, saw that Vesandara had only Matsi left and would probably give her away if anyone begged for her. So, he disguised himself as an old Brahman and begged for her, to prevent Vesandara from giving her to someone unworthy.

Vesandara readily gave her away, and she accepted, knowing that this highest sacrifice would win him success in his quest for perfection. Then, King Sakka showed himself and returned Matsi along with granting eight blessings in accordance with the Bodhisatta's wishes. Vesandara wished:

1. May King Sanjaya accept me back to govern as before.
2. May I be kind and have the right wisdom not to kill any person even though they might commit a bad crime.
3. May I have the loving kindness and right authority to be a public refuge and to be beloved by the public.
4. May I be satisfied firmly only with one wife even though many loving ladies might be offered.
5. May my son govern the state with might and authority and Dhamma practice.
6. May I always have sufficient food to donate to others with no end.
7. May my property support donations which only increase and never end – in accordance with my generosity.

8. When I pass away, may I be born as a high celestial being with perfect factors of perfection which never deteriorate.

Meanwhile, in Sivi, King Sanjaya listened to the stories of the grandson and granddaughter telling about their father and mother. After hearing all, he prepared his army to bring Vesandara and Matsi home. At the same time, the King of Kalingkarat returned Vesandara's white elephant. Vesandara's son Jali led the procession, riding on the white elephant. King Sanjaya and Queen Phusati also traveled in the procession.

When the procession arrived at the cottages of Vesandara and Matsi, the royal family were all happily reunited again. They all cried and then fainted. The earth quaked and pink rain fell, but never made anyone wet. All six who fainted recovered and returned to Sivi to govern as before. All of Vesandara's eight wishes were fulfilled.

After he passed away, he went to Tusita Heaven to wait, and when the time was right, he returned to earth as the first son of King Suddhodana and Phra Nang Siri Mahamaya of Kapilavatthu. He left Tusita on the full moon day of the month of Asalaha.

**Question 5:** Wow! That's quite a story. And, they all lived happily ever after. I understand the noble generosity, but I don't think any wife would agree to be given away today. Women have a mind of their own.

**Answer 5:** Well, times change, but Matsi knew that he must fulfill his Factors of Perfection to the utmost in order to

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become a Buddha. She was willing to make that sacrifice for him.

**Question 6:** Now, finally, please tell us about Prince Siddhattha's own years of preparation before becoming enlightened as the Buddha.

**Answer 6:** Prince Siddhattha was born on the full moon day of Visakha. He was married early to the beautiful princess Pimpa Yasodara, and had a son named Rahula.

Although sequestered, the young Prince began to experience real life step by step when he left the palace with his Charioteer Channa. On various outings he saw a sick man, an old man, a funeral procession, and a hermit.

At the age of 29 the Prince arrived at the firm decision to ascertain for himself the truth about life. He renounced his claim to the throne and his wife and family and entered the woods to live as a hermit. He left silently at night with his white horse Kanthaka and his Charioteer Channa, so that no one would stop him.

After crossing the Anoma River he cut off his hair and threw it in the air saying, "If I am to become enlightened, may it not come down." Celestial King Sakka, or Indra, caught the hair and took it to display in the Chulamani Pagoda in the second level of heaven. Thus, it never came down. Some of the hair can now be seen at Wat Luang Phor Sodh on special occasions.

Prince Siddhattha studied with two teachers. Alara Kalamakotr taught him the first seven Jhanas or states of

absorption, and Uddaka Ramaputta taught him the eighth. He succeeded well in these studies, but found their teachings insufficient for achieving total liberation from these three worlds. So, he went off to study on his own. Five hermits, led by Kondañña, the youngest of the Brahmans at Prince Siddhattha's naming ceremony, came to serve him.

He practiced the prevailing methods of self-torture until he realized that two extreme practices – sensual indulgence and self mortification – would not lead to enlightenment. Then, he shifted to the middle-path approach, purifying his mind through meditation and contemplation. As he progressed, the Five Hindrances sprang up to obstruct him. The Five Hindrances are laziness (*thinamiddha*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), ill will (*byāpāda*), restlessness (*uddhaccakukkukacca*), and sensual desire (*kāmachanda*). He suppressed each with the corresponding Jhana Factor: applied thought (*vitaka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), peaceful happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointed concentration (*ekaggatā*).

Suppressing and overcoming these obstacles, the Prince continued and ultimately destroyed the 10 fetters to achieve enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Gaya in North India on the full moon night in the month of Visakha. At the age of 35, he became the Buddha – 2,595 years ago.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. You have been both entertaining and instructive.

**Phra Rajyanvisith:** Thank you all for your attention. May Lord Buddha be with all of you.



## Chapter 5

# Lord Buddha's Enlightenment

October 7, 2007

**Question 1:** To begin, please tell us how our bodhisatta came to be born as Prince Siddhattha.

**Answer 1:** Our bodhisatta was awaiting his proper time in the Tusita Celestial World. He decided to be reborn when the average human age was about 100 years and selected Siri Mahamaya, the queen of King Suddhodana of Kapilavatthu as a very pure mother.

He left the Celestial world on the full moon day of the 8<sup>th</sup> lunar month, Asalaha, to be reborn in both human form and Dhammakaya essence. Dhammakaya is the pure essence of virtues which he had accumulated through realizing the Factors of Perfection.

He remained in his mother's womb longer than normal – a full ten months. Five days after his birth, 108 Brahmans performed the naming ceremony, naming him Siddhattha Gotama. All predicted he would be either an emperor or a Buddha, except the youngest, Kondañña, who insisted that he would definitely become a Buddha. His mother passed away when he was seven days old, and King Suddhodana assigned his aunt, Phra Nang Pajāpati Gotami, to raise him.



The King worried that his son might relinquish royalty for a religious life, so built him three palaces to maximize sensual pleasure during each season. When Prince Siddhattha was 16, King Suddhodana arranged his marriage with Princess Pimpa Yasothara who was the daughter of King Supabutha of Devadaha and Queen Amita, who was King Suddhodana's youngest sister.

**Question 2:** How did Prince Siddhattha come to renounce his royal birthright and become an ascetic?

**Answer 2:** Although indulged and sequestered, the young Prince learned about the reality of life on various outings with his Charioteer Channa. He saw an old man, a sick man, and a funeral procession, and recognized that birth inevitably leads to old age, sickness and death. He realized that he and all his relatives would eventually suffer the same fate.

The Prince also noted that when there is darkness, there is also brightness. Everything has its opposite. Therefore, suffering must, also, have its opposite – non-suffering, or no old age, no sickness and no death. He concluded that there must be some practice for reaching that state. On one outing, he saw an ascetic who was actually a celestial being appearing to show him the way out of the sensual enchantment which binds humans to the endless cycle of rebirths.

At age 29, Prince Siddhattha had a son, Rahula. When he heard of the birth, he felt overburdened. If he were to discover the practice leading to liberation from suffering and death, he must leave the palace. He arrived at the firm decision to renounce royalty and become a religious hermit.

He left the palace silently at night with his Charioteer Channa and his white horse Kanthaka. At the Anoma River, he ordained himself, cutting off his hair with his sword. He threw the hair into the air, saying “If I am to be enlightened, may it not come down.” Celestial King Sakka, also called Indra, caught the hair to display in the Maha Chulamani Pagoda in Davadungse Heaven. Thus, it never came down. Some of this hair can now be seen at Wat Luang Phor Sodh on special occasions.

Kathika Brahman, who had been a friend of Prince Siddhattha during Buddha Kassapa’s era and now lived in the Akanittha Brahman World, provided a robe and bowl to complete the ordination. Prince Siddhattha sent Channa back to the palace with his horse and ornaments, saying “Tell my father that I have ordained to put an end to old age and death, not because I yearn for heaven or feel no affection for him. Do not grieve for me.”

After ordaining, Prince Siddhattha studied meditation with the Hermit Alara Kalamakhotr. He quickly learned the seven jhanas taught and Hermit Alara invited him to stay on to teach others. He rejected this offer in order to continue his studies. Next, Prince Siddhattha studied with the Hermit Uddaka Ramaputta, and quickly mastered the 8<sup>th</sup> Jhana. Hermit Uddaka also invited him to stay on and teach, but he again refused, feeling the need to study further.

The bodhisatta found that the knowledge he had gained was still not sufficient for attaining release from our three worlds – the Human World of Sensual Desire, the Form Brahman World, and the Formless Brahman World. He saw

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that even though the highest, Formless Brahman Beings live a very long time, they still eventually die and fall back into the same cycle of rebirths. Therefore, he decided to undertake self-training to reach higher knowledge for release.

He went to Uruvela State, and settled near the Village of Senanikom, where there was a proper place to practice meditation and to collect alms. Five hermits led by Kondañña, the youngest Brahman at his naming ceremony, followed Prince Siddhattha to serve him.

Initially, Prince Siddhattha practiced the extreme measures of self torture which were the techniques accepted among hermits at that time for getting rid of passion. He almost died, and realized that he would not get enlightened in this way.

He was aided by the vision of a celestial being demonstrating the tightening of a string on a lyre. When the string is too taut it may break and when it is too loose, it doesn't make music. Thus, he adopted the middle path, between the two extremes of self-torture and indulgence.

A lady named Sujata, from a nearby village, brought him a golden bowl of milky rice, and he decided to eat. When he ate, his five hermit followers thought that he had given up and left him, going to Isipattana Deer Park in Benares Province.

When Prince Siddhattha was left alone to meditate without distraction, his meditation became better and better as his body became fresher and stronger. He went to the Neran-

jara River and set the golden bowl adrift, wishing that if he were to be enlightened the tray should float upstream. It did.

**Question 3:** Now, please tell us about the night on which Lord Buddha became enlightened.

**Answer 3:** On the day before his enlightenment, the bodhisatta collected alms, bathed, and rested. In the evening, he sat down under the Bo Tree, making a comfortable seat with grass from a grass-cutter named Sotthiya.

He wished that if he were to be enlightened, he might see his transparent throne. And, he saw it. This gave him confidence. He sat under the Bo Tree facing east towards the river, with his back against the tree. Then, he resolved that he would not get up until he attained enlightenment, even if his flesh and blood dried up.

In the first four-hour watch of the night, he began by concentrating his mind up to the Fourth Jhana to make it perfectly concentrated and free from the Five Hindrances. These are laziness (*thinamiddha*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), ill will (*byāpāda*), restlessness (*uddhaccakukkucca*), and sensual desire (*kāmachanda*). He suppressed each of these with the corresponding Jhana Factor. The Jhana Factors are applied thought (*vitaka*), sustained thought (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), peaceful happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointed concentration (*ekaggatā*). Then, he was ready to develop supernatural knowledge and right understanding.

Once in the Fourth Jhana, he made the wish to recall past lives. When this was well developed, he could see uncountable past lives – not only his own, but the past lives of

all world beings. He saw them being born and going through old age, sickness and death, and then, reincarnating again, endlessly.

A few are reborn into the happy worlds such as the Human, Celestial, or Brahman Worlds. Most, however, go to the suffering worlds such as the Animal or Hungry Ghost Worlds, within the human realm, or the Demon or Hell Worlds which are beneath Mount Sumeru. These worlds are invisible to the human eye. Almost all of the universe is so refined that it cannot be seen with the naked eye. Our human world is just one little part of the whole.

Lord Buddha's enlightenment was like scientific research. He developed his mind to be a very powerful, effective and efficient instrument for observation, like the doctor's microscope or the astronomer's telescope. He developed supernormal seeing, hearing and touching. Lord Buddha used these to see the reality of nature as it really is. With his supernormal vision, he saw all world beings and all worlds down to the lower depths of the universe.

In conclusion, during the first watch of the night, Lord Buddha saw the past. He saw the whole universe with all its various types of beings, and saw that all of these are caught up in the endless cycle of death and rebirth. He, also, saw that most world beings get reborn into the suffering worlds. This led him to feel great compassion for all sentient beings. Having seen this as the true nature of reality, Lord Buddha asked himself why is it like that.

**Question 4:** What did the Bodhisatta do during the second four-hour watch of the night?

**Answer 4:** During the second watch of the night, from ten P.M. to two A.M., Lord Buddha again began by meditating up to the Fourth Jhana to make his mind pure of hindrances. He made a wish to see why world beings, after dying, are reborn into various worlds – mostly suffering worlds. He asked “What is behind this? Why do these beings not practice the best conduct to get free?” He wished to follow individual beings from the past through the present and into the future, to enable him to see the cause and effect of past actions leading to rebirth in either suffering or happy worlds.

He learned that life is change. Everything is impermanent. The whole world and all world beings are always subject to change. This change is in accordance with their good or bad actions. Human life changes based on the quality of human actions. World beings commit some good and some bad actions in each lifetime. Thus, beings in happy worlds are sometimes happy and sometimes not. But, they are always subject to old age, sickness and death – even those in the Brahman and Formless Brahman Worlds. Formless Brahmans may live to see three or four Buddhas, but in the end they still pass away.

Lord Buddha saw five major causes of rebirth in the suffering worlds. Number one was intentionally killing other world beings. Number two was theft. Number three was adultery. Number four was telling lies. Number five was addiction to intoxicants. World beings who acted improperly received suffering as the result, either during the present life

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or after dying. Bad actions were the essential cause of being reborn into the suffering worlds.

To conclude, in the second watch, Lord Buddha saw the natural law of cause and effect, the Law of Kamma, that all world beings get reborn in accordance with their good or bad behavior. He saw directly how past actions influence the present and the future.

**Question 5:** And, what did he do during the third watch of the night?

**Answer 5:** In the third watch of the night, Lord Buddha again began by bringing his mind to the Fourth Jhana to free himself from hindrances and gain supernormal vision. Then, he began to analyze in detail the vast store of reliable and valid data that he had obtained with his very pure and efficient supernormal observation. He had already obtained the necessary and sufficient data. Now he began to analyze it in depth, seeking the root cause of suffering and the practice for liberation from suffering.

He discovered Dependent Origination, with ignorance as the root cause of suffering. Ignorance causes delusion, passion and craving which, in turn, cause rebirth in new worlds. If bad, it inspires the mind to bad conduct, which causes rebirth in suffering worlds. For those who do good, but still have ignorance, the ignorance causes them to be reborn in happy worlds. But, when they die from there, they may be reborn in either happy or suffering worlds, according to their previous conduct.

There are three aspects of ignorance: First, not knowing the past or the future. Living in this world is like a chicken inside an egg who never sees the outside. We don't know where we were before becoming human. And, we don't even know what will happen tomorrow, much less after we die. The second type of ignorance is no knowledge of the causes of suffering, as detailed in Dependent Origination. The third type of ignorance is no knowledge of the Four Noble Truths. In conclusion, in the Third Watch Lord Buddha analyzed the root cause of suffering and penetrated through the Four Noble Truths.

**Question 6:** Specifically, what lessons should we draw from Lord Buddha's Enlightenment to apply in our daily lives?

**Answer 6:** Lord Buddha's quest was not mere academic analysis. He set out to conquer suffering: old age, sickness & death. Thus, his analysis formed the foundation for formulating solutions. There are four key lessons that we should learn and apply in our daily lives: The *Ariasajja* or Four Noble Truths, *Sila* or Moral Precepts, *Samadhi* or Concentration Meditation, and *Vipassana* or Insight Meditation.

The First Lesson is the *Ariasajja* or Four Noble Truths which encompass both the analysis of the problem and formulation of the solution. They provide the Right Understanding that life is suffering and the revelation that there is a way out.

The First Noble Truth is the realization that world beings are suffering. This insight is necessary to awaken us out of our habitual passions and complacent enchantment with the sensual pleasures of life. They are all temporary, and



inevitably lead to discontentment, dissatisfaction, disappointment, distress, and despair when they end. This is the ordinary nature of human suffering that we can all understand. Lord Buddha also saw that most humans will be reborn in suffering worlds. Thus, he saw life as suffering in a higher, transcendental sense.

The Second Noble Truth analyzes the causes of suffering in the Formula of Dependent Origination. Ignorance causes delusion, passion and craving which, in turn, cause rebirth.

The Third Noble Truth is the revelation of a way out to a state of non-suffering – Nirvana. This provides the hope, optimism, faith, and motivation to find and follow that way. Incredibly, Lord Buddha has shown the path to overcoming the universal problems of life – old age, sickness and death.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Eight-fold Path detailing conduct leading to the cessation of suffering: Right View (*Samma Ditthi*), Right Thought (*Samma Sangkappa*), Right Speech (*Samma Vaca*), Right Action (*Samma Kammanta*), Right Livelihood (*Samma Ajiva*), Right Effort (*Samma Vayama*), Right Mindfulness (*Samma Sati*), and Right Concentration (*Samma Samadhi*).

The Second Lesson is Sila or morality, avoiding evil and cultivating good. Proper conduct is good action, speech and thought. At a minimum, avoiding taking life, stealing or cheating, and adultery. Positive actions include treating others with loving kindness and compassion, being helpful, and sacrificing one's own property, time, or knowledge to help others.

Proper speech is avoiding lying, tale-bearing, harsh language, and useless talk or gossip. Positive speech includes being truthful, sincere, polite, helpful and encouraging, fostering unity, and giving good advice.

Proper thought is avoiding greed, hatred, and delusion. Positive thought includes generosity, loving kindness, and developing mindfulness, wisdom and insight.

Proper action, speech and thought, in accordance with Lord Buddha's teachings, leads to permanent happiness rather than the temporary happiness which comes from sensual pleasure.

The Third Lesson is Samadhi or concentration meditation, raising the level of consciousness through states of absorption (*Jhana*) to eliminate hindrances and see clearly with the mind. This can develop the supernormal vision, hearing and touching which Lord Buddha used to investigate the true nature of reality.

The Fourth Lesson is Vipassana or insight meditation which reveals ultimate Truths. Most important are the three supernormal fields of knowledge (*Vijja*) which Lord Buddha utilized to reach enlightenment.

We can follow his example to get transcendent insight. The first *vijja* is *pubbenivasanussati-ñāna* – remembrance of past lives, which Lord Buddha pursued during the first watch of the night. The second *vijja* is the *cutupapata-ñāna* – knowledge of the rebirths of all beings in accordance with the Law of Karma. Lord Buddha practiced this during the second watch of the night. The third *vijja* is the *asavakkhaya-ñāna* –

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knowledge of eradication of mental defilements which Lord Buddha employed during the third watch of the night to verify enlightenment. Clear discernment with these Vipassana insights can enable us to follow Lord Buddha's example to higher knowledge.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. You have not only shown that Lord Buddha's methodology for attaining enlightenment represents a sort of improved scientific method, but have also extracted the specific lessons for us to follow.

**Phra Rajyanvisith:** Thank you all for joining us. May Lord Buddha be with all of you.

## Chapter 6

# The Noble Eightfold Path

November 4, 2007

**Question 1:** First, please summarize for us Lord Buddha's ultimate findings from enlightenment.

**Answer 1:** Good morning, everyone. Lord Buddha's ultimate findings from enlightenment can be briefly summarized as the Four Noble Truths. The first is the Truth of Suffering – that life in this world is fundamentally unsatisfactory and ultimately suffering, leading inevitably to old age, sickness and death.

The Second is the Truth of the Cause of Suffering. The immediate cause is craving – excessive desire, similar to addiction – also called passion. From our self-centered point of view, we crave to cling to the things we love and avoid the things we hate. But, craving and clinging conflict with the law of nature. Life IS change. Change is inevitable. More profound analysis reveals that the ultimate cause underlying suffering is ignorance – ignorance of the past, ignorance of the future, ignorance of the cause and effect linking past to future, ignorance of Dependent Origination and ignorance of the Four Noble Truths.

The Third Noble Truth is the truth of a way out to a state of non-suffering – Nirvana or Nibbana. This was Lord Buddha's great breakthrough. Our world is transitory, unsatis-

factory, and, in the long run, non-self, but Nibbana is eternal, ultimate peaceful happiness, and potentially True Self. This contrast provides the hope optimism, faith, and motivation to seek and achieve that state. Incredibly, Lord Buddha discovered the solution to the universal problems of life – old age, sickness and death. You could meditate to experience Nibbana temporarily for yourself, as others have done. But, most world beings will never meditate and never get that marvelous feeling.

More broadly, transcendental states of cessation of suffering can be referred to as “Dhammakaya” States. The word “Dhammakaya” refers to the purest states of Lord Buddha’s virtues, beyond this world. There are nine such states – eight “Noble Disciple” states plus Nirvana. They represent the last leg of the journey to liberation. The Noble Disciple is guaranteed of eventual success.

The Fourth Noble Truth is the Eightfold Path mapping the passage to exit our current tread mill of misery and scale the heights to reach the serene tranquility of home – Nirvana. Our task as individuals is to each use this map to successfully complete our own personal journey. The eight trails of the path can be summarized into three main routes. The first is Right Moral Behavior, in line with the laws of nature, which avoids creating suffering for ourselves and our fellow beings. The second is Right Mental Training which raises our consciousness to new capabilities and understanding. The third is Right Wisdom which arises from successful moral behavior and mental training.

**Question 2:** Can you detail the first for us – Right Moral Behavior?

**Answer 2:** Right Moral Behavior involves three lanes: Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood.

Right Speech is detailed as avoiding four wrongs: (1) falsehood, (2) divisive talk, (3) harsh language, and (4) frivolous chatter or gossip. Spreading false teachings, such as the belief that killing enemies is meritorious, is also seriously wrong speech. Phrased positively, right speech is truthful, polite, harmonious, and useful.

Right Action is refraining from three immoral behaviors: (1) intentionally killing living beings, (2) theft or corruption, and (3) adultery or depraved sex. Stated in positive terms, it is (1) helping other beings to avoid suffering and increase happiness with loving kindness, sympathy, and mercy; (2) donating and sacrificing one's own possessions or efforts for the good of others; and (3) controlling the passions to act wisely and determinedly maintaining vows.

Most simply, Right Livelihood is refraining from five immoral vocations: (1) trading in human beings, as in slavery or prostitution; (2) trading in weapons, including their production, distribution or sales; (3) trading in flesh, for example, raising animals for slaughter or selling meat; (4) trading in intoxicants, such as alcohol and narcotics; and (5) trading in poisons for killing world beings. In addition, all dishonest practices, such as smuggling and tax fraud, and even legitimate commerce employing deception are wrong livelihood. Finally, businesses such as night clubs or gambling casinos,

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which lead humans down the road to ruin through careless behavior such as drunkenness, recklessness, licentiousness, or gluttony are wrong dealings. In contrast, there are a multitude of positive, useful careers which do not cause disaster to oneself or to others. Look especially for those which are helpful and beneficial.

**Question 3:** What about the second main route in the Eightfold Path – Right Mental Training – what does it involve?

**Answer 3:** Right Mental Training is the key to ultimate success in Buddhism, because it introduces meditation. It is only through meditation that the final goal of Nirvana can be achieved. Right Mental Training also involves three traffic lanes – Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

Right Effort is exertion to purify yourself by getting rid of bad habits which cause sorrow and regret and developing good habits which bring peace and happiness. There are four Right Efforts: (1) Diligence being careful not to let bad habits arise in one's character; (2) Diligence to get rid of bad habits which have already arisen; (3) Diligence to introduce new healthy habits; and (4) Diligence to preserve and develop existing healthy habits.

Right Mindfulness is detailed in Lord Buddha's main sermon on meditation – the Four Foundations of Mindfulness: (1) Mindfulness of body; (2) Mindfulness of feeling; (3) Mindfulness of the heart and mind; and (4) Mindfulness of the phenomena which arise in the heart and mind. For each,

contemplation involves recognizing that this is not a person or “self” of either oneself or someone else.

With Samadha-Vipassana Meditation, this can be experienced directly at various levels of consciousness, in accordance with Lord Buddha’s literal instruction to perceive the “body-in-the-body.” Here, mindfulness of the body-in-the-body means observing and experiencing the various inner bodies nested inside each other, by always stopping still at the center of the center.

Seeing the Refined Human Body, the meditator becomes the Refined Human Body and again focuses at the center of that body, successively arriving at the crude and refined Celestial Bodies, the crude and refined Brahman Bodies, and the crude and refined Formless Brahman Bodies, before transcending to the supra-mundane Dhammakaya Bodies. Upon becoming each body, the meditator also experiences directly the corresponding feelings, mind and mind-objects. From then on, meditators are drawn beyond the obsessive clinging to external physical objects which produces human suffering.

Right Concentration is Samadha Meditation involving the four “Jhanas” or states of absorption, going deeper and deeper inside to remove the five hindrances which impair clear comprehension. The Five Hindrances are (1) drowsiness or laziness, (2) doubt or uncertainty, (3) ill will or enmity, (4) distraction or restlessness, and (5) sensual desire or enchantment. In Samadha Meditation, these are overcome by developing the corresponding Jhana Factors: (1) Applied thought or attention, (2) Sustained thought or investigation, (3) Rapture

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or joy, (4) Happiness or contentment, and (5) One-pointed concentration. Development of these Jhana States prepares the way for meditating to the supernormal states of knowledge known as “*Vijja*.”

**Question 4:** And then, what is the third main route in the Eightfold Path – Right Wisdom?

**Answer 4:** Right Wisdom means transcendental insight beyond normal worldly comprehension. It includes two specific elements – Right Understanding and Right Intention.

Right Understanding means clear, direct, personal comprehension of the Four Noble Truths and of the characteristics of both compound worldly phenomena and the non-compound phenomenon of Nirvana. There are nine plateaus in this ascent: the eight Noble Disciple States and Nirvana.

Noble Disciple States are transcendent conditions, beyond worldly levels of comprehension. There are four pairs, each consisting of a crude state corresponding to being on the path and a refined state corresponding to having achieved that destination. The first level is Stream-Enterer or *Sotapana*, achieved by one who has attained release from the first three of the ten final fetters binding one to this world – self concept, doubt, and attachment to rites and rituals. This meditator has transcended to entry into the final leg of the journey to enlightenment and is guaranteed of eventual success. A *Sotapana* examines the Four Noble Truths at the celestial level. When this significantly reduces greed, hatred, and delusion, the meditator progresses on to the second level of Noble Disciple, the Once-Returner or *Sakadagami*.

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The Sakadagami only needs to return to our world one more time before achieving enlightenment. The Sakadagami examines the Four Noble Truths at the Brahman level. When this results in liberation from two more fetters – sensual enchantment and annoyance. The Sakadagami rises to the third level of Noble Disciple, Non-Returner or *Anagami*.

The Anagami never returns to this world again. He lives all remaining lifetimes in the Five Pure Abodes (*Suddhava* planes) of the Form Brahman Realm, until achieving final enlightenment. The Anagami examines the Four Noble Truths at the Formless Brahman level. When he achieves liberation from the remaining five higher fetters – clinging to the Pure Form Realm, clinging to the Formless Realm, pride, day-dreaming, and ignorance, he becomes a Dhammakaya Saint or *Arahant*, the fourth and highest level of Noble Disciple, free from all defilements.

The Arahant enters Nirvana and is able to compare with clear discernment the Three Characteristics of mundane phenomena (impermanence, suffering and non-self) with the ultimate reality of Nirvana, which exhibits the opposites – eternity, supreme peaceful happiness, and eventually True Self for those who completely cultivate and permanently attain Nirvana.

**Question 5:** So then, Right Understanding is direct discernment and clear comprehension of the Four Noble Truths. What is Right Intention?

**Answer 5:** The Noble Eightfold Path should be practiced at all levels of existence. Right Understanding and

Right Intention arise together with the entire Path in our Realm of Sensual Desire, in the Pure Form Brahman Realm, in the Formless Brahman Realm; and at the transcendental level. Right Understanding of the laws of nature helps us to avoid danger and gives rise to appropriate intentions at each level. There are three main components of Right Intention: (1) the intention to escape sensual desire (*nekkhamma sangkappa*); (2) the intention to escape vengefulness (*abyapada sangkappa*); and (3) the intention to escape aggression (*avihimsa sangkappa*).

**Question 6:** Thank you, sir. And, what is this supra-mundane knowledge or “*Vijja*” that we hear about?

**Answer 6:** The Three “*Vijja*” or supernormal fields of knowledge are those which Lord Buddha utilized to reach enlightenment. We, too, can use them to follow his example and gain transcendent insight. The First *Vijja* is remembrance of past lives – *Pubbenivasanussati-ñāna* – which Lord Buddha pursued during the First Watch of enlightenment night.

The Second *Vijja* is the knowledge of the deaths and rebirths of all beings in accordance with natural cause and effect, the Law of Karma – *Cutupapata-ñāna* – which Lord Buddha practiced during the Second Watch of enlightenment night.

The Third *Vijja* is the knowledge of complete purity from mental defilements – *Asavakkhaya-ñāna* – which Lord Buddha employed during the Third Watch to recognize his enlightenment. Clear discernment with these *Vipassana*

insights can enable us to follow Lord Buddha's example to higher knowledge.

The expanded list of "Eight Vija" also includes the six supernormal powers gained through Vipassana Meditation:

1. Insight knowledge or *Vipassana-ñāna*, clear discernment of mind and body as impermanent, suffering and non-self;
2. Mind-made magical powers or *Manomayiddhi* such as multiplying bodies;
3. Supernormal powers or *Iddhividhi*, demonstrating powers such as moving objects with the mind;
4. The Divine Ear or *Dibbasota*, hearing at a distance;
5. Mind reading or *Cetopariya-ñāna*;
6. Remembrance of former lives or *Pubbenivasanussati*;
7. The Divine Eye or *Dibbacakkhu*, seeing at a distance;
8. Knowledge of complete purity from mental defilements or *Asavakkhaya-ñāna*.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith. You have explained the Noble Eightfold Path in both its mundane and transcendent modes, providing us with a lot to think about.

**Phra Rajyanvisith:** Thank all of you for joining us. May Lord Buddha be with all of you and may Lord Buddha bestow special blessings on His Majesty the King and his Royal Elder Sister in this time of illness. May they be restored to full health and vigor and continue to live long and productive lives.



## Chapter 7

# Sila: Moral Behavior

December 2, 2007

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith, welcome venerable sir. This is our sixth Sunday Dhamma Talk. We have been examining Lord Buddha's enlightened wisdom from various perspectives. Last time we discussed the Four Noble Truths, focusing on the Eightfold Path which details the Three Trainings: Right Moral Behavior, Right Mental Training, and Right Wisdom. Today we will focus specifically on "Sila" or Right Moral Behavior, the First Training, examining in detail Lord Buddha's challenging insights into moral cause and effect – the sweet and bitter fruits of good and bad behavior.

**Question 1:** To begin, could you please review briefly what we have discussed previously.

**Answer 1:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to begin by correcting one statement we made earlier based on a misconception that is widespread throughout Thailand. It concerns Kondañña and the Five Hermits who were Lord Buddha's first disciples. It has been widely said that Kondañña was the youngest of the 108 Brahmans who foretold the future of Prince Siddhattha as a baby and that he was the only one to predict firmly that Prince Siddhattha would definitely become a Buddha and that he organized the sons of four other Brahmans to follow him to serve Prince Siddhattha because the other Brahmans had all passed away.

I have recently learned the correct information published in a commentary to the Phra Suttantha Pitaka, Majjima Nikaya, Mula Panasaka, Sutta No. 5, Volume 2, Article 284 pages 94-100, published by Mahachulalongkorn University. The correct information is that there were only eight brahmans invited to the naming ceremony for Prince Siddhattha, not 108. They had been previously invited when Queen Siri Mahamaya had her dream about the White Elephant. Kondañña was not one of them. He was the son of one of them. Of the eight Brahmins, the first three predicted that the baby would be either a Buddha or a world-conquering monarch. The last five all predicted that he would definitely go forth to the religious life and become a Buddha.

These five Brahmins were elderly, but told their sons to follow Prince Siddhattha when he ordained. These five sons became the Five Hermits. Kondañña was the eldest of them. They all followed Prince Siddhattha when he ordained and studied from Alara Kalamakhotr and Uddaka Ramaputta along with him.

The names of the first three Brahmins at the naming ceremony were: (1) Ram-Brahm, (2) Tha-cha-Brahm, and (3) Lakanao-Brahm. These three predicted that he would become either a Buddha or an Emperor. The last five Brahmins were: (4) Chotimantee-Brahm, whose son was Kondañña, (5) Yanya-Brahm, whose son was Vappa, (6) Supocha-Brahm, whose son was Pattiya, (7) Suyama-Brahm, whose son was Mahanama, and (8) Suthata-Brahm, whose son was Assaji. I apolo-

gize for the previous misinformation and hope that this correction will help other Thai scholars to understand properly.

**Question 2:** Thank you very much, sir. Now, let us turn to “Sila” or moral behavior. How do the Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood that we discussed last time relate to the Five Precepts?

**Answer 2:** The Five Precepts are teachings which the Buddhist undertakes personally, like New Year’s Resolutions, for self control and improvement. They stem from Lord Buddha’s enlightened insight into the true nature of reality, spanning not only one lifetime, but multiple rebirths and lifetimes. In particular, the Five Precepts are designed to avoid the five major causes of rebirth into hell and the suffering realms. Overall, they aim at self control of behavior so as not to violate or cause suffering to oneself and other living beings.

For example, the first precept is to refrain from intentional killing. If this precept is violated, this brings about suffering for other beings and also produces bad effects for the one doing the killing. In the present lifetime, it can cause direct retaliation such as being killed in return or being seized and thrown into jail. Lord Buddha perceived that it also results in sickness and various seemingly chance life-threatening events such as accidents, as well as a shorter lifespan.

He gained the insight that when a cosmos is new and humans are pure, the average human lifespan is about one *asangkaya* or  $10^{140}$  years – which seems like an almost



infinite length of time. Over the centuries, however, the average human lifespan decreases by about one year per 100 years, due to killing other beings. Thus, in Buddha's day, the lifespan was 100 years. Now, 2,500 years later, the average is about 75 years.

Avoiding killing means avoiding killing all living beings, not just human beings. Thus, fishing and raising animals for food are clearly against the Buddhist precepts and result naturally in unwholesome effects. Buddhists even avoid killing the mosquito that is biting, by just brushing it away.

In addition to bad results in the present lifetime, Lord Buddha saw that killing produces rebirth in hell. The first hell, Sañjiva, is mostly for killing. There, hell beings are brutally cut into pieces or burned to death and then revived to be killed again until their debt is paid. This continues an unimaginably long time; the average stay in Sañjiva Hell is  $1.6 \times 10^{12}$  earth years. After paying their debt, these beings are reborn as humans, but they will be sickly, have short lifetimes, and suffer other serious problems. Abortion, for example, first causes the doers to be born in hell. Then, eventually, when they are reborn as humans, they will die in the womb, either before or during the rebirth process. Suicide is also killing and results in going to hell. When eventually reborn as humans, these beings continue to commit suicide time after time.

The positive opposite of killing is doing good and helping others, treating all beings with loving kindness and

mercy. This will win good friends and develop warm relationships in the same lifetime. Thus, humans who steer clear of killing live peacefully, free from enemies, and also avoid the horrific future karmic results. Such wholesome behavior opens opportunities for making further merit and receiving higher rewards such as celestial rebirth.

**Question 3:** What about the second precept to avoid theft?

**Answer 3:** Those who violate the second precept, to avoid theft, corruption and cheating, will not be happy in their present lifetime, because they will be continually worrying that their bad conduct might be revealed and punished. They may also be punished legally by the court of justice. And, they are likely to suffer from being cheated by others.

In future lifetimes, they will reap the karmic results of their bad behavior. The second hell, Kālasutta, is primarily for thieves. Here, hell beings are laid out on red hot steel plates, marked off with black threads, and then cut into pieces, over and over again. The average stay is  $13 \times 10^{12}$  earth years. Swindlers and thieves may also be reborn as one of the twelve kinds of hungry ghosts who wander suffering from hunger and searching in vain for food and clothing. After repaying their debt, they will again be reborn as humans, but will be very poor – perhaps even beggars.

The positive opposite of theft is doing good with generosity and honesty, such as donating one's own property,

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sharing Dhamma and useful knowledge in one's career, and sacrificing one's time, or foregoing one's own happiness to help others.

**Question Q4:** And then, what about those who violate the third precept on committing adultery?

**Answer 4:** Those who commit adultery or perform immoral sexual acts with uncontrolled passions, will suffer in their present lifetime from strained relationships within the family, quarreling, and broken homes. They may even be killed over jealousy. This violation causes big social problems – even into the next generation – because it also results in children being born out-of-wedlock, and the children suffer psychological problems from lack of loving, loyal parents. Thus, they may grow up as disobedient delinquents at odds with their parents. And, the children too, will be likely to indulge in improper sexual behavior. This is very much what we see in our present social reality.

Those who commit adultery also reap the future karmic result of rebirth into the suffering realms. The third hell, Sanghāta, is primarily for sexual offenders. Here, beings are first roasted in the fires of hell and then crushed to death between two steel mountains, over and over again. The average stay is  $104 \times 10^{12}$  earth years. Sexual offenders may also be reborn as animals such as dogs or as hungry ghosts.

After paying off the moral debt, the offender will eventually be reborn as a human being again, but with many

lifetimes of failures. The sexual offender will first be a prostitute for many, many lifetimes. Eventually, after that, the person becomes first a homosexual, then a woman, and eventually a man. This is what Lord Buddha perceived and reported after his enlightenment as the reality of natural rebirth phenomena. It may seem hard to believe, but each of us has the ability to see it for ourselves, if we meditate as Lord Buddha did. Samatha-Vipassana Practice can bring the meditator to develop the supernatural vision and hearing which permit achieving this insight for oneself.

Wholesome behavior, opposite to committing adultery, is being true to one's partner and carefully controlling sexual activity. It brings the immediate benefits of a stable, warm, loving family life and well-adjusted, happy children. In addition, it avoids both social problems and disastrous future personal consequences.

**Question Q5:** What about violation of the fourth precept on telling lies?

**Answer 5:** In the present lifetime, lying, deceitfulness, dishonesty and double-dealing cause one to earn a reputation as an unreliable person. This engenders lack of trust and results in fewer and fewer good friends, close colleagues, and loving partners, in both work and social life.

Liars are also reborn into the suffering worlds. The fourth hell, Roruva, is primarily for such hypocrites. There, hell beings are repeatedly laid face-down in steel lotuses and

incinerated amid cries of pain. The average stay is  $831 \times 10^{12}$  earth years. Liars may also be reborn as hungry ghosts or as animals. After paying their debt, they are eventually reborn as human beings again, but are unreliable and suffer from a very bad smelling mouth – far beyond the usual.

Wholesome behavior, opposite to deceit, is being honest with yourself and others. It results in a reputation for sincerity and reliability which builds interpersonal trust and an expanding network of good friends and colleagues who hold one near and dear. It also avoids the terrible future consequences in store for liars.

**Question 6:** Finally, what about violations of the fifth precept – avoiding intoxicants?

**Answer 6:** Addictions to intoxicants or smoking cigarettes or marijuana or using opium, heroin, etc. brings disastrous consequences immediately in the current lifetime. These consequences are most apparent directly as physical and mental disabilities which can range from Sclerosis of the Liver to Delirium Tremens. Addiction also leads to catastrophic social consequences such as loss of employment, marital separation and divorce, and potentially homelessness. Even when families stay together, addictive behavioral tendencies are usually instilled from the parents into the children.

All addicts, without exception, are certain to be reborn in hell. The fifth hell, Mahāruruva, is primarily for alcohol and drug addicts. It's name means the hell filled with great

screams of pain. In one torture, hell beings stand on steel lotuses with sharp hot petals and are burned inside out through all nine body openings. In another torture, hell beings are kept in a huge cauldron of molten metal which they must drink, and it burns their insides out. The average stay in Mahāroruva Hell is  $6,635 \times 10^{12}$  earth years. The seventh hell, Mahātāpana, is also related. It is primarily for those descending the “Road to Ruin” (*apayamukha*) like bar-hopping which often integrates intoxication, sexual excesses and gambling. The average stay here is genuinely cosmic – about half of a sub-eon (*antarakappa*).

Lord Buddha’s enlightened insight revealed that addicts will eventually be reborn as humans again after paying off their moral debt, but will be insane for many lifetimes and then graduate to being mentally retarded. After they eventually develop beyond this, they will still remain forgetful.

Wholesome behavior, in this regard, is avoiding alcohol and drugs. It results in clear, bright consciousness, right mindfulness, and proper understanding of Dhamma, immediately recognizing good and bad. This is very advantageous. It leads to practicing Dhamma in the right way, doing good, living better, improving mindfulness, and enjoying good physical and mental health. In the future, such exemplary behavior can lead to rebirth in the celestial realms.

**Question 7:** What about social drinking, which is so widely prevalent in all cultures? What consequences might it bring in future rebirths?

**Answer 7:** A lifetime characterized by social drinking could result in rebirth as a stupid giant (*Yaksa*) with misconceptions and wrong intentions. Progress along Lord Buddha's Eightfold Path requires alert, clear sighted mindfulness which is too easily dulled by even small amounts of intoxicants.

In conclusion, the first of the three trainings which make up the Eightfold Path is "Sila" or moral behavior – Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood – which do not cause suffering for either oneself or for other beings. These are specified in Lord Buddha's Five Precepts. Diligent adherence to them generates peaceful, happy living and opens new opportunities such as heaven. Violation of the Five Precepts produces disastrous suffering for both oneself and other living beings, both in the present and future rebirths, including the specter of hell.

**Question 8:** Well, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith, you have certainly given us a lot to think about. The consequences of violating any of the five precepts seem to be inconceivable periods of incredible torture in hell. But, how do we know that this isn't just like other fables that our parents made up when we were young to make us be good?

**Answer 8:** The beauty of Lord Buddha's teachings is that we all have the ability to see for ourselves. We can each

individually follow Lord Buddha's example by meditating up to the fourth Jhana to purify our mind and attain superhuman vision, then experiencing and knowing the true nature of reality directly and unequivocally. It is not easy, but it is not impossible. Those dedicated enough to put in the effort can succeed. This is the way to know for sure, independent of what anyone else says. Dhamma is to be seen here and now (*sanditthiko*), timeless (*akaliko*), inviting all to come and see (*ehipassiko*), leading inward (*opanayiko*), and to be seen by each wise person for himself (*paccattang veditabho viññuhi*). There are many trustworthy monks who have already seen for themselves.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith, for your stimulating and challenging presentation which leaves us all with a great deal to contemplate.

Now, in closing, on the eve of our King Bumiphol Adulyadej's eightieth birthday, I would like to ask Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith to close with a formal blessing for His Majesty.

**Phra Rajyanvisith:** Before offering our blessing, may we all make our minds as clear as possible with meditation. We begin by closing our eyes gently, taking a long breath, and focusing our attention at the center of the body, just about two inches above the navel. You may imagine a transparent sphere as really existing there, or some may see a transparent Buddha Statue. Focus your attention to the center of the center, while reciting the words "*samma arahang*" to yourself, over and



over, continually. Observe your breathing in and out passing through the sphere. No need to follow the breath, just stay still at the center of the center, observing your breathing and reciting “*samma arahang*” continually and mindfully. Your mind components will gradually come together to one point at the center of the center. The mind components are vision, memory, thought and awareness. Continue focusing your attention at the center and reciting “*samma arahang*,” “*samma arahang*,” so that your mind components become more and more peaceful.

Then, make a wish that Lord Buddha’s virtues – his Purity and Enlightened Wisdom – become yours. Purity is the word “*Arahang*” and Wisdom is from the word “*Samma*” meaning “*Samma Sambuddho*.” Your mind components will become purer and purer, more and more peaceful, then more and more concentrated, and clearer and clearer, whether you see anything or not. When your mind comes to the most peaceful level, make a wish that all Lord Buddha’s virtues be conveyed to His Majesty the King. May His Majesty enjoy more and more radiant and vigorous physical health and more and more peaceful happiness, continuing to live long and reign well, governing his country and his devoted and loyal citizens with Right Wisdom and long-lasting peace, protection and prosperity, free from problems and suffering forever. Now, let us all share all of our merits and loving kindness with His Majesty the King and with all Thai People and with all sentient beings.

## Chapter 8

# Conclusion

In summary, this is the first volume in a series presenting Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith's Sunday Dhamma Talks in English. It covers the first year, BE 2550 (CE 2007). There were six talks, broadcast from July through December. They began with an overview of Lord Buddha's teachings, related as the story of the "Night on Which Lord Buddha Attained Enlightenment," and continued through details of the First Training on "*Sila*" or Moral Behavior.

This text has provided a crucial foundation for mindful daily living and detailed the alarming consequences for those robotically following the reckless behavior rampant in modern society. Along the way, it has corrected critical misconceptions widely accepted as routine dogma, including fallacies regarding Lord Buddha's first five disciples. It has conveyed an extremely unique blend of transcendental and academic insight. We are extraordinarily privileged to have it available in English.

The broadcast series will continue throughout BE 2551 (CE 2008). Talks are aired on the first Sunday of every month at 8:00 AM, Bangkok Time (GMT+7:00), over four frequencies of the Thai National Broadcasting System: FM 88, FM 95.5, FM 107, and AM 918. We hope you can join us.

Both sound tracks and transcripts can also be downloaded from Wat Luang Phor Sodh's English-language website: *en.dhammadakaya.org*. If you have any questions or comments about any broadcast or would like to contact us for any other reason, you can reach us either by email at **bmi@dhammadakaya.org** or via our Buddhist Meditation Institute Bulletin Board (Interact) on the *en.dhammadakaya.org* website.

*Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro*  
*Interviewer and Editor*



# **APPENDICES**



## Appendix A

# Profile of The Author

## Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith

*Meditation Master & Buddhist Scholar*



1. Abbot, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram (July 9, 1991)
2. Preceptor (Upachaya) (January 31, 1996)
3. Principal-Meditation Master, Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute (2006) *An Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University*
4. Vice-chairman of the Administrative Committee, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Region 15 Academic Services Center (November 19, 2007)
5. Director, Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Institute (1981)
6. Manager, Rajburi Provincial Pali Studies Centre (Appointed by the Sangha Body, October 20, 1999)
7. Director, Rajburi Provincial Meditation Practice Centre (Appointed by the Sangha Body, March 6, 2001.)

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith's mission is to revitalize Buddhism, placing equal emphasis on scripture study and meditation practice. He is currently 78 years old and carrying out the work of three ordinary men, working around the clock. He has published over 40 books, 200 articles, and two journals. He makes monthly radio and TV broadcasts nationwide and internationally in both Thai and English, and has

recorded over 700 Dhamma lectures. His efforts have achieved noteworthy success both in the national Dhamma and Pali examinations and in training over 1,500 senior monks as Vipassana meditation teachers. Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith has studied, practiced, & taught Buddhist meditation since 1970. He has passed Nak Dhamma Ek & Pali Level 6, and has taught meditation since 1982. From 1986-1989, he taught Buddhism at 17 universities and temples throughout the United States.

On March 6, 1986, he ordained at Wat Paknam with the name Sermchai Jayamanggalo, sponsored by Phra Ong Chao Somsawali (Phra Worarachathinatdamatu, mother of the royal grand-daughter). His Preceptor (*Upachaya*) was His Holiness Somdej Phra Buddhakosajarn, assisted by His Holiness Somdej Phra Buddhajarn (the former Phra Phrom Kunaporn - Abbot of Wat Saket and currently Chairman of the acting Supreme Patriarch Committee) and His Holiness Somdej Phramaharajamankalajarn (the former Phra Dhampanyabodi - Abbot of Wat Paknam). His meditation master was the Venerable Phra Bhavana Kosol Thera, who is now Phrarajbrahmathera, Deputy Abbot, Meditation Master, and Director of Meditation Affairs at Wat Paknam Basicharoen.

Phra Rajyanvisith has been the Abbot of Wat Luang Phor Sodh, which he founded and built, since July 9, 1991. The Wat currently trains over 20,000 participants per year. It has been designated by the Sangha Body as both a Provincial Pali Studies Centre (on October 20, 1999) and as a Provincial Meditation Training Centre (on March 6, 2001). At that time,

less than 100 of the 35,000 temples in Thailand had achieved this honour. In 1998, he received the Royal Ecclesiastical Rank of Phra Bhavana Visutthikhun, and in 2004 the rank of Phra Rajyanvisith. He received his honorary doctorate in Buddhist Administration from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in 2007.

The major focus of his work has been on education, with equal emphasis on academic study and meditation practice. Academically, his Rajburi Provincial Pali Studies Center prepares students for the national Dhamma and Pali Examinations (*Navaka*, Dhamma 3, 2, & 1, Pali grammar, and Pali Levels 1-2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and the highest Level 9). Regular classes are supplemented by special examination review sessions. The Centre has achieved unprecedented success. In 2003, all five candidates for the highest (Level 9) examination passed, making national headlines. This year, in January 2007, four out of nine Pali Level 9 candidates passed.

Other academic education includes Phra Rajyanvisith's courses in Wat Administration for senior monks and general administration for government officials and private business personnel.

The Wat also serves as the pre-university training centre of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University for monks throughout Ecclesiastical Region 15 (four central provinces), teaching Sangha Administration at the certification level and Buddhist Administration at the BA level. Additional



courses, such as a Buddhist Studies Course at the BA level and a Buddhist Administration Course at the MA level will be opened in the next (2007) academic year.

For Meditation Education, Phra Rajyanvisith's continuing training programmes have prepared over 1,500 monks to become teachers of Vipassana, utilizing his three textbooks teaching Samatha-Vipassana meditation based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. He has also conducted semi-annual meditation retreats (May 1-14 and December 1-14) since 1982. These intensive practice sessions in small groups include living in tents, and are currently attended by 600-700 participants – monks, novices and laity.

In early years, Phra Rajyanvisith took meditation on the road with "Mobile Meditation Units" teaching meditation in some provinces throughout Thailand. The temple currently conducts 3, 5, 7, or 10-day meditation-Dhamma workshops for various lay groups (especially students and teachers) year-round, except during the rainy-season. The Wat also conducts an annual three-week "Hot Season Novices Program" for roughly 300 boys. In addition, there is regular Sunday Dhamma Practice for laity, with a bus leaving Wat Saket in Bangkok at 07:00 and returning around 16:00 every week.

Phra Rajyanvisith achieves international outreach thru the Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute, an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University, established in 2006. It conducts 2-week meditation workshops

in English throughout the year and two meditation retreats, May 1-14 and December 1-14. It also produces radio programs, publishes books, and supports meditation online thru its website ([en.dhammadakaya.org](http://en.dhammadakaya.org)), all in English.

### **As a Layman**

Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith was born as Sermchai Polpatanaritdhi on March 6, 1929, in Nangrong District of Buriram Province. He earned an M.A. in Public Administration from Thammasart University in 1965, and worked as a Research Specialist in the Research Office of the United States Information Service until early retirement at age 57 to ordain as a monk. During this service, he pursued advanced studies at the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and in Washington, D.C. In Bangkok, he also served as a visiting lecturer on research and evaluation at various Thai universities, including Thammasart and Bangkok University.

### **Address**

Phra Rajyanvisith, Abbot  
Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammadakayaram  
Bangpae-Damnoen Saduak Highway (Km 14)  
Damnoen Saduak District, Rajburi Province 70130, Thailand  
Tel: (+66) 032-253-632, ext. 111; Fax: 032-254-954  
Email: [abbot@dhammadakaya.org](mailto:abbot@dhammadakaya.org)

Websites:

Thai: [dhammadakaya.org](http://dhammadakaya.org)

English: [en.dhammadakaya.org](http://en.dhammadakaya.org)

## Appendix B

### Chao Khun Phra Mongkol–Thepmuni

The master of the Vija Dhammakāya approach, the late Abbot of Wat Paknam, the Venerable Chao Khun Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni, is fondly known and revered throughout the land as Luang Phor Wat Paknam, or simply as “Luang Phor Yai,” meaning senior father or meditation master.

Luang Phor was born October 10, 1884 (BE 2427) to a humble rice-merchant family of Supanburi Province as Sodh, the second child of Nai Ngern and Nang Sudjai Meekaewnoi. As was typical in those days, young Sodh received his education from the temples. At fourteen, when his father died, he became the chief bread winner for the family. Successful as he was in rice trading, at age nineteen the compassionate young man resolved to become a monk (*bhikkhu*) for life.

Having made arrangements to ensure his mother’s welfare, the young man entered monkhood three years later, in July 1906 (BE 2449). At the age of twenty-two, he was ordained as Candasaro Bhikkhu at Wat Songpeenong, near his home. Phra Ajahn Dee of Wat Pratusarn, Supanburi, was his main Preceptor.

The day after his ordination, Candasaro Bhikkhu began meditation practice and study of Pali scriptures in search of deeper and wider knowledge, he moved from

Wat Songpeenong to Wat Bodhi (Wat Phra Chetupon Vimonmangkalaram) in Bangkok. There, he frequented the centers of meditation practice and Pali study.

Soon, Luang Phor was recognized by his teachers, Phra Khru Yanavirati (Po) of Wat Bodhi and Phra Ajahn Singha of Wat Lakorn Tham, as an accomplished meditation instructor.

During those early dry seasons, Luang Phor adopted *Dhutanga vatra*, the Austere Practices for Purification such as wandering in solitude through the forest wilderness, staying in caves and practicing the *Dhamma* with piety.

After ten years, Luang Phor set aside his informal study of the Pali Scriptures, having reached sufficiency to read the Mahā-Satipatthāna Sutta. Thereafter he devoted himself totally to meditation practice.

Luang Phor spent the next Buddhist Lent at Wat Bang Khoo Vieng, on Bangkok Noi Canal, where his benefactor, Phra Ajahn Choom, was the abbot. There, at nightfall on the full-moon day of September, in his twelfth year as a Bhikkhu, Luang Phor prepared himself for meditation in the *uposatha*. He invoked illumination and guidance, and made a vow dedicating his life to Buddhism. Luang Phor vowed not to rise from his seat in front of the Buddha statue until he was permitted to attain some understanding of the *Dhamma* as discerned by the Buddha.

With his mind set and its components of vision, memory, thought and cognition all at rest at the center of his

body, two finger-breadths above the navel, Luang Phor was able to penetrate the full depths of the *Dhamma* as it was revealed to and by the Buddha. That revelation of the Dhamma and ever more refined Dhammakāyas (Dhamma bodies) was so profound that it was only possible when the mind was at rest at the body's center. After lent, Luang Phor went to teach at Wat Bang Pla, where three monks and four laymen who followed his meditation procedure were also able to attain various degrees of insight. Thereafter, Luang Phor gradually became reknowned throughout the land.

Somdej Phra Vanarat, Head of Bhasicharoen Sangha District, spotted Luang Phor's potential and requested him to assume the Abbotship of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen. This was a neglected and deteriorating monastery erected five centuries earlier. Luang Phor wanted to decline this request, but he could not. With utmost patience and remarkable leadership, Luang Phor gradually rebuilt the monastery until it is today one of the largest and most important monasteries in the land. In 1949 (BE 2492), Luang Phor received the ecclesiastical rank of Phra Bhavana-Kosolthera. This was followed by the title Phra Mongkol-Rajmuni, and in 1957 (BE 2500) by the title Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni.

*Vijjā Dhammakāya*, the revelation of the *Dhamma* as attained by Luang Phor, was the heart of his teaching. His service to Buddhism can be seen from his regular routine:

- \* Meditating day and night with bhikkhus and upāsikās in different sessions.

- \* Leading *Bhikkhus* and *sāmaneras* in the uposatha every morning and evening, paying homage to the *Triple Gems* and ending with a sermon.
- \* Teaching public meditation practice every Thursday at 2:00 pm.
- \* Delivering public sermons on holy days (*Uposatha* or *Wan Phra*) and Sundays.
- \* Supervising the Pali Institute.

Thus, Luang Phor devoted his time and effort almost exclusively to teaching meditation. His disciples multiplied into the thousands. It was not uncommon for revered *bhikkhus* in far corners of the country, who apparently never met Luang Phor, to know him well and to respect him as their mentor.

His decease at the age of 75, on February 3, 1959 (BE 2502) was just a pause for the immortal master. His life should serve to remind other mortals to pursue their own obligations to the *Noble Path* carefully. Luang Phor's teachings live on, manifesting the *Ultimate Righteous Truth*.

*Phra Bhavana-Kosolthera*  
(*Veera Ganuttamo*)  
(*Now Phrarajbrahmathera*)

## Appendix C

### **Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram**

#### Overview

Wat Luang Phor Sodh is named after the late Abbot of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen, the Venerable Chao Khun Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni, affectionately known as Luang Phor Sodh. In 1917, he rediscovered the *Vijja Dhammakaya* meditation technique, integrating *samatha* and *vipassana* to reach internal states of transcendence, in accordance with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The meditation is effective for both those who seek to understand reality and the meaning of life and for those seeking inner purification. Wisdom and virtue develop hand-in-hand as one progresses beyond the distortions of the passions.

The Wat's objective is to revitalize Buddhism with equal emphasis on meditation practice and scripture study. It serves as a provincial centre for both meditation and Pali studies, and as an educational centre for both the World Buddhist University and the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University for monks. It trains over 20,000 participants per year. Meditation retreats were initiated in 1982 by the precursor of the wat, the Dhammakaya Buddhist Meditation Institute. The Wat was registered in 1991. The campus is a beautifully landscaped 33-acre park, featuring a lake and rivers surrounded by grass and trees. Temple buildings are vividly white, to signify purity. There are generally about 100

monks and 60 novices in residence, joined continually by hundreds of short-term participants in the Wat's constant stream of varied educational programs.

The address is Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram, Damnoen Saduak District, Rajburi Province 70130, Thailand. It is located at Km. 14 on the Bang Pae – Damnoen Saduak Highway, 94 km. southwest of Bangkok. The number 78 air-conditioned bus from the Southern Bus Terminal will drop you off at the gate. The Wat Telephone number is (+66) 032-253-632 (Thai only). For English, call Phra Bart at (+66) 089-068-0521, or email him at [bmi@dhammakaya.org](mailto:bmi@dhammakaya.org) or [PhraBart@gmail.com](mailto:PhraBart@gmail.com), or fax: 032-254-954. Please see Wat Luang Phor Sodh's websites for details. The English-language website is [en.dhammakaya.org](http://en.dhammakaya.org), and the Thai website is [dhammakaya.org](http://dhammakaya.org).

### **Programs**

The Wat conducts numerous educational programs on meditation and scripture study in both Thai and English, as follows:

#### **Programs in Thai**

1. **Sunday Dhamma Practice:** Wat bus leaves Wat Saket, Bangkok, at 07:00 and returns about 16:00.
2. **Workshops:** 3, 5, 7, or 10-day meditation-Dhamma study workshops for various lay groups – students, teachers, government officials, state enterprise/private business personnel, etc., (year-round except during the rainy-season), train over 20,000 participants per year.



3. **Retreats:** Two semi-annual retreats for hundreds of laity and monks, May and December 1-14, since 1982.
4. **Vipassana Teacher Training:** Two-week courses for meditation masters, May & Dec 15-28, have trained over 1,500 monks.
5. **Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University:** Pre-university studies for Monks in Region 15 and special studies in Wat Administration, Buddhist Administration, and in Buddhist Studies.
6. **Dhamma Studies School:** Three month preparation for National Dhamma Exams (*Nakdhamma 3, 2, 1*).
7. **Pali Studies School:** Three month preparation for national Pali exams in grammar and levels 1-9.
8. **Radio Broadcasts:** 24-hour FM radio station plus weekly and monthly national and international Dhamma Talks in Thai.
9. **Publications:** Over 40 books, numerous pamphlets, and a monthly journal in Thai.
10. **Ordination for Monks:** Weekly Saturday ordinations plus special group ordinations.
11. **Ordination for Novices:** Weekly plus 2-week “Hot Season” Novices Program.
12. **Special Ceremonies:** Four major Buddhist holidays plus Dhammakaya holidays plus special events.
13. **24-hour meditation for world peace:** Continual advanced meditation in shifts around the clock. New Meditation Vihara in the lake almost complete.
14. **Pilgrimage center:** Building Phra Maha Jetiya Somdej to display the Wat’s exceptional collection of Buddha relics.
15. **Center for making merit:** The wat is offering very sacred Buddha statues as “Thank you” for major

donations for Jetiya construction, some donated by celestial beings.

16. **Website:** Dhamma & meditation in Thai on ***dharmakaya.org***.

### **Programs in English**

17. **Workshops:** Year-round 2-week meditation workshops start on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of each month.
18. **Retreats:** Two semi-annual retreats May 1-14 and December 1-14.
19. **Meditation Online:** Currently downloadable meditations and Dhamma talks at ***en.dhammadharma.org***.
20. **Website:** Buddhist Meditation Institute (An Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University) at ***en.dhammadharma.org***. Includes forums.
21. **Radio Broadcasts:** Monthly Dhamma Talks over National Broadcasting Service of Thailand – 08:00 on the first Sunday of each month on FM88, FM95.5, FM107, and AM918.
22. **Publications:** (1) Phra Rajyanvisith 1991, 1997 & 2008, The Heart of Dhammadharma Meditation, (2) Phra Rajyanvisith 2007, Sunday Dhamma Talks 2550, (3) Mae Chee Amphai Tansomboon 2008, The Buddha Dhamma Propagation of Phra Mongkoltheppuni. MA Thesis Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, (4) Potprecha Cholvijarn 2008, Nibbāna as Self or Not Self: Some Contemporary Thai Discussions, MA thesis University of Bristol.

## Appendix D

# Phra Maha Jetiya Somdej

Wat Luang Phor Sodh's biggest and most important current project is constructing Phra Maha Jetiya Somdej to enshrine sacred Buddha relics, to pay reverence to Lord Buddha, and to prolong the life of Buddhism. The Jetiya is expected to become a major Buddhist pilgrimage site for paying reverence to sacred Buddhist relics.

The Wat has an extraordinary collection of Buddha relics. There are crystal replicas of all seven relics which escaped cremation – the four wisdom teeth, two collar bone pieces, and the forehead piece. The original relics are preserved elsewhere, so these crystal reproductions were materialized and donated by senior celestial beings. In addition, there are numerous genuine relics. These include 115 pearl-sized pieces of Lord Buddha's breast bone, about 20 very refined hairs of Lord Buddha and many long black hairs of Prince Siddhattha, as well as many smaller granular relics from Lord Buddha and some Arahant disciples.

The relics are not yet on outside public display except on special days. The temple is currently receiving donations to build a very beautiful Jetiya, Phra Maha Jetiya Somdej, for displaying the relics. Construction is currently in phase I, laying the foundation. There will be four floors. The ground

floor will house the management offices and provide a place for 2,000 laity to meditate, conduct ceremonies, and hold general conferences. The second floor will be a large meditation hall for 2,000 monks. The third floor will be a museum of important Buddha statues. Finally, the fourth floor will display the Buddha relics.

The estimated ultimate cost, including decorations, is 450 million Baht. This is a unique opportunity for devotees worldwide to participate in one of the most sacred enterprises of modern Buddhism. The Jetiya is destined to preserve the faith and revitalize the faithful for centuries. His Holiness Somdej Phra Buddhacharn, Chairman of the Supreme Sangha Body, is Chairman of the Jetiya Fund Raising Committee. Donating to this magnificent cause is probably the most effective merit-making opportunity any of us will encounter in this lifetime.

To express gratitude for generous contributions, the temple is offering a variety of very sacred Buddha statues as “Thank You” gifts. Some were received in sacred ceremonies from eminent celestial beings. Others are very rare and extremely valuable antiques. Also, the names of those who donate at least 100,000 baht will be engraved in the Jetiya.

There are three methods for making a donation: (1) Directly at Wat Luang Phor Sodh; (2) By mailing a crossed check (two diagonal lines in the upper right hand corner) to Wat Luang Phor Sodh, specified for Jetiya construction; and (3) By bank transfer to either (3.1) Bangkok Bank Damnoen Saduak Branch Account 422-0-25469-4 for Wat Luang Phor

Sodh Jetiya construction, or to (3.2) Siam Commercial Bank Damnoen Saduak Branch Account 540-2-18485-8 for Wat Luang Phor Sodh Jetiya construction. When donating by bank transfer, please fax the bank transfer receipt with a covering letter giving the name, address and fax number of the donor. The Wat Luang Phor Sodh fax number is (+66) 032-254-954 or (+66) 032-253-632 extension 123.



The Abbot



Phra Dr. Barton

## Appendix E

# Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute

### Meditation

Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute, an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University, teaches Concentration-Insight Meditation (*Samatha-Vipassana*), which has proved extremely effective. Meditation proceeds to successively higher levels by *always focusing at the center of the center*. In previous retreats all participants found inner peace, almost half meditated to transcendence (Dhammakaya), and one-fourth experienced Nirvana temporarily.

### Workshops & Retreats

The Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute now offers 24 two-week meditation courses per year: 22 intimate workshops and 2 intensive retreats. Workshops and retreats are open to ALL, worldwide. No prior experience or religious beliefs are required.

Workshops are usually the 1-14 & 16-29 of each month, but are replaced by the intensive retreats for 1-14 May & 1-14 December. Participants are urged to sign up for at least two weeks because it usually requires one week to develop the inner calm needed for further progress. However, all are welcomed for either longer or briefer periods.

### **Teachers**

The Abbot, Dr. Phra Rajyanvisith directs the Institute and teaches advanced meditation. He is one of Thailand's most eminent Meditation Masters and Buddhist scholars, and has led the Wat to become a centre of excellence in both meditation practice and Buddhist studies. He is fluent in English and will personally teach advanced meditators.

Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro, an American monk, leads the workshops and retreats in fluent English, teaching introductory and intermediate meditation. He is a former professor and an international development specialist, with a Ph.D. in Sociology & Social Psychology from Cornell University, who has been a monk for six years.

### **Daily Routine**

Workshops are usually intimate, with not more than ten participants. They schedule three meditation sessions per day at 07:00, 9:00 and 14:30, plus one Q&A session at 15:30. Meditations are recorded on CD to take home. Advanced meditators and others interested can join Evening Chanting

and Meditation at 19:30 which may taught by the Abbot and/or Morning Chanting and Meditation at 05:30.

Participants take eight precepts [NO killing, stealing, sex, lying, intoxicants, eating after noon, entertainments (shows, music, ornaments, perfumes, etc.), and high or luxurious beds] and dress in simple white clothing (available at the temple store) to signify purity.

For workshops, women stay in a screened traditional Thai Sala by the lake and men in a modern house across the street from the temple. For retreats, women stay in the school buildings and the men in the Thai Sala. Sleeping is generally on the floor, on thin mattresses, under mosquito nets. All facilities have clean restrooms.

We do not practice Noble Silence. No smoking is permitted at the temple. The staff will hold valuables for you. Both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food are available. Please register online at [en.dhammadakaya.org](http://en.dhammadakaya.org) & specify your preference.

Retreats are more intensive, with a fourth daily meditation at 05:00. They involve 15-50 international meditators. Several hundred monks and laity attend the Thai retreat simultaneously. During retreats there is more access to the venerable Meditation Master in joint Thai-English sessions. There is also more chance to study Buddhist practices, Vinaya, Dhamma and Chanting. The large number of participants necessarily means less silence.



## **Registration, Contact & Directions**

Please register on-line at *en.dhammadakaya.org*. Email Phra Bart at [phrabart@gmail.com](mailto:phrabart@gmail.com) or [bmi@dhammadakaya.org](mailto:bmi@dhammadakaya.org), or call (+66) 089-068-0521, or fax (+66) 032-254-954.

Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram is 2 hours from Bangkok by #78 air-conditioned bus, which leaves the Southern Bus Terminal every 20 minutes 06:00-19:00. Please arrive at the wat between 06:00 and 18:00. (We invite you for Lunch at 11:00.) Bus fare is about 70 baht, paid in advance at ticket counter #25. **Do Not Take Any Other Bus!!!** Tell the conductress to inform you when to get down at Wat Luang Phor Sodh. Remind her again after 1.5 hours.

### **For taxi to bus terminal: ขนส่งสายใต้**

Southern Bus Terminal.

### **To find the right bus:**

รถ **78** ดำเนินสะดวก Bus 78 to Damnoen Saduak.

### **To show to the bus conductress:**

วัดหลวงพ่อดชธรรมกายาราม

ริมถนนบางแพ-ดำเนินสะดวก, กม 14

**Wat Luang Phor Sodh Dhammakayaram**

You should see a guard house at the Wat gate. If possible, telephone Phra Bart immediately **(089-068-0521)**. Enter the temple and turn right on the paved driveway parallel to the highway, keeping the canal on your left. Walk to the fork and see the Information Centre with a tall pointed roof on your left. Continue behind this building to the Wat Mini Mart. They will call Phra Bart to meet you there.

### **Donation**

Compensation is by donation. Please be generous; your donation supports other meditators. A minimum contribution of 1,200 Thai Baht per week (about EU 25) is requested to cover basic expenses.

## Appendix F

# The Wat Luang Phor Sodh Websites

Wat Luang Phor Sodh has websites in both English and Thai. The English-language website is *en.dhammadhamma.org*, and the Thai-language website is *dhammadhamma.org*.

The English language website focuses on the Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute, an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University, which conducts year-round meditation training in English. It includes an interactive forum and bulletin board which permits meditation alumni and others to exchange information and keep up to date.

Radio broadcasts are downloadable from the website as both sound-tracks and printed scripts.